

A RUNG ON THE LADDER: A MIXED-METHODS STUDY OF WRITING STUDIES MA  
PROGRAMS PREPARING STUDENTS AS RESEARCHERS

A THESIS  
SUBMITTED TO THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
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## Abstract

As scholars in English and Writing Studies wrestle with the purpose and scope of master's degrees, questions about curriculum and expectations reflect multiple values, local exigencies, and considerations of pathways to future careers. Reflecting these conversations, the purpose of this convergent mixed-methods thesis is to identify how MA programs in Writing Studies are preparing MA students as researchers. This convergent mixed-methods study had two primary phases: 1) A content analysis of 30 online program descriptions of MA programs, paying particular attention to how programs discuss and present research, and 2) An online survey distributed to MA program directors, research methods professors, or other appropriate faculty asking questions about curriculum, final projects, and research experiences offered to master's students. The findings of this study suggest MA programs in Writing Studies are providing minimal preparation for students as researchers and rely primarily on exposure to existing research in coursework and through experiences such as culminating projects like master's research projects, theses, portfolios, and comprehensive exams. The data collected in these two phases indicates master's programs are highly idiosyncratic, which may result from an emphasis on local exigency compared to national guidelines and ideas about the purpose of a MA in Writing Studies. As MA programs serve as bridges to PhD programs and academic or non-academic careers, individual MA programs must consider the purpose of the MA degree and how these programs are serving master's students in their programs but a larger conversation needs to take place at a discipline-level to question the purpose of a MA degree in Writing Studies.

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*Note about language:* This paper will use the singular pronoun they/their when referring to a ungendered singular noun like researcher, aligning with NCTE's "Statement on Gender and Language" and will also use they/their when referencing a researcher unless their scholarship includes reference to their pronoun/s (spoiler alert: most do not).

## Chapter 1 - Introduction and Review of the Literature

*This is a book on methods to study how human things work in particular situations. Sometimes, we generalize beyond the particular situation, but we concentrate on how things work in certain contexts, at certain times, and with certain people.*

—Robert Stake, *Qualitative Research: Studying How Things Work*

*I don't know what the fuck I'm doing.*

—Grad student doing research

I don't consider myself a researcher, even though before this study I've gone through two IRB reviews in two different institutions (one full review because of minors present in the study and one expedited review). Instead, when asked what I do, I answer with, "I'm a grad student," leaving out my positions and identities as a graduate tutor in my local Writing Center, my administrative position as the Assistant Graduate Director of the Writing Program, and First Year Composition (FYC) instructor at my university. None of the graduate students I have informally asked, including MA or PhD students, identify as researchers even though they have to do research (this is anecdotal and doesn't count as datum in this study). And I think this is a bit strange because as graduate students, we *do research* all the time—whether for a seminar paper, an empirical project for a thesis or dissertation, or a small or large study for a conference presentation or publication.

Especially as a graduate student in an MA program in Writing Studies, I don't know if I can consider myself a researcher. That's reserved for PhD students and professors: A future identity I can don once I get my velvet tam. I even had a conversation with a professor about the purpose of

my MA degree, specifically as it relates to conducting research, and they told me that MA students don't really conduct Master's theses anymore since it isn't really necessary—a Master's project, or a smaller project more comparable to a journal article, suffices for future endeavors like a PhD program, work in academia, and industry. As someone who is interested in research and wants to ask questions and then create research inquiries to address these questions, I wondered when I was expected to start this shift towards producing original research, leading me to this project.

To start my search, I wanted to understand what national organizations in Writing Studies recommended, either in terms of the purpose of a master's degree in writing studies or guidelines or best practices for curriculum or experiences and opportunities for master's level students as researchers. This included searching through the websites of national organizations like the Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), and the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists (MDCWSS). I scoured the websites, hoping to find official policies or position statements that would provide guidance or insight. And I wasn't able to find anything. The MDCWSS had program information and statistics about current master's programs in Writing Studies, but there were not any recommendations for curriculum or expectations for master's programs or master's students. Instead, I found position statements outlining best practices for teachers and writing studies professionals, which includes master's and doctoral students, even when not explicitly mentioned.

To prepare future teachers of postsecondary writing and to help define best practices for the field of Writing Studies, the Conference on College Composition & Communication (CCCC) has released statements on the "Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing" and a "Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing." These statements have been created with a variety of audiences in mind which "should inform the preparation and ongoing professional development of

instructors in Dual Credit/Concurrent Enrollment programs, graduate teaching assistants, and new and continuing faculty” (CCCC “Statement on Preparing”). CCCC’s notes, “These principles extend from empirical research in the fields of English Language Arts and Composition and Rhetoric from existing statements developed by the field’s major organizations” (CCCC “Principles”). Therefore, even though this is not the purpose of the position statement, the national organization in the field of Writing Studies argues empirical research has been instrumental in creating these position statements and is an important piece of the ongoing discussion about best practices for writing teachers.

In the CCCC’s position statement, “Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing,” the organization argues graduate teaching assistants should be required to complete “coursework in composition theory, research and pedagogy; [and] in rhetorical theory and research” to not only understand best teaching practices, but to be able to implement them in their own courses. This reliance on existing research reflects the descriptions of the MA programs in Writing Studies collected by Stuart Brown, Monica Torres, Theresa Enos, and Erik Juergensmeyer in their 2005 article, “Mapping a Landscape: The 2004 Survey of MA Programs in Rhetoric and Composition Studies.” Out of the 57 programs represented in their study, the word “research” is mentioned 137 times by the survey respondents. In this overview, the word is found in general descriptions of programs, program goals, research interests of faculty, and in course offerings. Therefore, MA programs in Writing Studies, at least the programs represented in the study, value research as both a way to inform praxis/pedagogy but also as an integral part of their curriculum.

An explicit connection between teachers and research is made in the National Council of Teachers of English position statement, “The Teacher-Research Connection” published in 2005. In this position statement, NCTE (the national organization to which CCCC is a subsidiary), argues “day-to-day practice in English language arts classrooms must be informed by research collected

through rigorous, systematic inquiry” and argue “As teachers apply the research of others to their own classroom contexts, they begin the kind of reflection that leads to the generation of their own research—often as teacher/practitioner research.” This idea of being exposed to and conducting original research is further addressed in the Conference on English Education (CEE now called ELATE or English Language Arts Teacher Educators) position statement, “Understanding the Relationship between Research and Teaching.” This position statement furthers NCTE’s “The Teacher-Research Connection” by addressing the purpose, characteristics, and use and engagement of research in English language arts. Together, NCTE and ELATE/CEE argue that effective teachers of English language arts are well versed in the existing research and are then able to implement this research in their own contexts, which will then lead to research conducted by teachers. While these position statements are primarily focused on K-12 teachers, my current argument furthers this call for the teacher-research relationship to postsecondary institutions and postsecondary instructors, graduate students, faculty and staff.

Finally, adding to the discussion about creating successful postsecondary writing instructors, the Council of Writing Program Administrators (CWPA), the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), and the National Writing Project (NWP) published their “Frameworks for Success in Postsecondary Writing” in 2011 to best identify what successful writing instruction should teach students to ensure student success in and out of the classroom. These frameworks present the desired outcomes for students taking credit bearing writing courses in postsecondary contexts and are related to the Council of Writing Program Administrators’ outcomes for students after completing a first-year writing course sequence (3). The publication includes descriptions of the habits of mind and “explains how teachers can foster these habits of mind through **writing, reading, and critical analysis** experiences” in their courses (1, bold in original). The organizations define habits of mind as “ways of approaching learning that are both intellectual and practice and

that will support students' success in a variety of fields and disciplines" (1). The habits of mind are curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition. While these specific habits of mind are not explicitly related to the teachers of postsecondary writing students, I would argue that teachers and instructors need to possess these habits of mind before they are able to create courses to help students practice and apply these habits of mind. Additionally, graduate students, both MA students and PhD students are writing for college level credit bearing courses; therefore, I would argue that graduate students should be included as an intended population for these frameworks.

Overall, the sentiments in the CCCCs position statements, NCTE's position statement, the CEE/ELATE position statement, and the "Framework For Success in Postsecondary Writing" echo other works such as Betty Pytlik and Sarah Liggett's book *Preparing College Teachers of Writing: Histories, Theories, Programs, Practices*; Christine Farris and Chris M. Anson's *Under Construction: Working at the Intersections of Composition Theory, Research, and Practice*; Deborah Coxwell-Teague and Ronald Lunsford's *First-Year Composition: From Theory to Practice*; and Linda Adler-Kassner and Elizabeth Wardle's *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies*. Together, these pieces illustrate a common language about what Writing Studies means when it discusses writing and how to prepare future teachers of writing—the students in Writing Studies graduate programs—at all levels, all while being ground in research from the field.

However, missing from these conversations about preparing future postsecondary teachers of writing is an analysis of the purpose of the MA in Writing Studies. The MA in Writing Studies is a degree that acts as a bridge to PhDs in Writing Studies; academic positions such as Writing Center Directors, Writing Program Administrators, instructors and adjuncts; or a bridge to non-academic or industry positions. An MA degree, regardless of the field, is a time-, labor-, intellectually-, and

emotionally- intensive undertaking; therefore, the MA degree must be analyzed and theorized to better understand the goals and purpose of the degree.

In response to recognizing the purpose, current reality, and possible future of graduate education, the Modern Languages Association (MLA) held a conference in 1999 at the University of Wisconsin-Madison titled, “Conference on the Future of Doctoral Education.” Results, including presentation papers, a roundtable discussion, and post-conference discussions were published in the journal *PMLA* in October 2000. Issues ranged from defining, funding, and defending doctoral programs associated with the MLA (Stimpson); professionalizing graduate students in an era of hyper-productivity (Graff); to reimagining the MA degree as a site of reestablishing inquiry into the discipline since many undergraduate programs are not fully preparing students for doctoral study (Gaylord); and making/marketing the MA as profitable for job-seekers (Giordano). This discussion prompted further exploration and research in MLA and in the discipline of Writing Studies, resulting in Doug Steward’s 2004 article, “The Master’s Degree in the Modern Languages since 1966” in *Profession* from MLA, and Thomas P. Miller and Brian Jackson’s 2007 article, “What Are English Majors For?” in *College Composition and Communication* from CCCCs (an affiliate of the National Conference for Teachers of English, or NCTE). In Steward’s article, they cite Cary Nelson’s critique of MA programs in that “master’s degree programs [are] using master’s students in order to float their PhD programs without providing the students with any clear career direction in return” (Steward 170). In their research, Steward found fewer MA degrees were completed after 1970 and connects this to the economic turn in the 1970s which caused women, who made up a large portion of MA degree recipients before this collapse, to pursue master’s degrees in other programs, and to this downturn Steward faults “the [MA] degree’s lack of obvious vocational direction” (176). In their analysis of English degrees, Miller and Jackson offer critique of compartmentalized departments offering degrees, especially at large research universities. Miller and Jackson write, “We need situated

programs of research and teaching that focus on the cultures of our regions, the literacies of local communities and schools, and the political forces that are imposing reductive assessments of literacy on public education” (703). The authors argue this happens, “[N]ot just by creating new writing majors but by reenvisioning programs of study in ways that help students and teachers see public education as a collective enterprise that is vitally involved with the social and technological changes that are redefining literacy and the literate” (703).

While many of these discussions were happening at the turn of the millennium, there has not been substantial scholarship identifying how to redefine the MA program as a place and process of professionalization. If the MA programs in Writing Studies, and even in English overall, are being offered as a bridge to PhD programs, teaching positions, academic jobs, and industry jobs, then the field of Writing Studies needs to address how the MA is preparing students as both teachers and researchers. As the position statements from CCCCs note: Effective teachers are effective consumers and producers of research. While the position statements do not argue that every teacher should be conducting dissertation-level projects in their positions, my intuition tells me the habits of mind resulting from conducting research are crucial skills and mindsets to produce not only promising prospective PhD students, but also teachers in general and students pursuing work outside of academia.

While scholars in Writing Studies at large have not begun to question the role a graduate degree can play in students’ lives, this is not the case for a specific subfield of Writing Studies: Technical Communication. In Technical Communication recent attention has been paid to how graduate students (read: doctoral) are being developed as researchers and professionals in their field; however, the research being conducted in Technical Communication does not address MA students. So overall, there has not been a concerted effort to understand how MA students in Writing Studies programs are being prepared as researchers or professionals and how the MA degree itself fits with



this goal (for a distinction between Writing Studies and Technical Communication see Rude; Peebles and Hart-Davidson; and Gerdes). As MA students are expected to conduct original research as a requirement of many MA programs, how these programs are preparing students to be successful MA students and researchers needs to be addressed, regardless of a student's future choice of industry or academia. Additionally, in the existing literature, little attention is paid to curricular matters regarding MA programs. Scholars argue for and against the MA in Writing Studies, but only a few address what is being taught in these programs (Knievel and Sheridan-Rabideau; Hunter, Giddens, and Walters; Miller and Jackson). Finally, even though the majority of MA students have to conduct original research in the form of a project or thesis, there has not been a concerted effort to understand what kind of research most MA students are doing as a part of their program, resulting in a lack of understanding about what kinds of research MA students are expected to know entering a PhD program, if this is their desired trajectory.

If the MA degree in Writing Studies is being offered as a bridge to future endeavors, then the desired outcomes of an MA degree need to be crafted consciously, not only through institutional program goals and course offerings, but through a concerted and explicit connection of program practice to Writing Studies disciplinary values. According to the CCCCs position statements, teachers of writing, including dual-credit high school teachers, non-contract faculty, adjuncts, graduate student teaching assistants, and faculty must have a strong foundation in empirical research to implement best teaching practices. Therefore, the research of these programs needs to be conducted to better theorize the purpose of MA programs for students. Even if an MA student does not plan to pursue a PhD, I still believe the habits of mind practiced through learning about and conducting original research are transferable to their future endeavors. The practice of identifying problems, creating a research inquiry to address these problems, all while doing so ethically and responsibly, are ways to enact the habits of mind. Learning about and conducting research takes

curiosity, openness, engagement, creativity, persistence, responsibility, flexibility, and metacognition. And as the CWPA, NCTE, and NWP write, “These habits help students succeed in a variety of fields and disciplines” (4). These habits of mind are intentionally transferable to non-academic settings. However, currently, we do not have a firm understanding of how MA programs are preparing MA students to develop these habits of mind, specifically in their development and practice as researchers.

To address this lack of understanding, this study addressed the following research question: How are graduate MA programs in Writing Studies preparing MA students as researchers? The goal of this project is to assess whether these MA graduate programs are aligning practice with the values of the field and to address what kinds of research MA students in Writing Studies are doing as a part of their MA programs.

The purpose of this convergent mixed methods study was to combine findings from a qualitative exploration of this topic with a small sample, to design a survey instrument to be distributed to a larger sample of MA programs in Writing Studies, and then analyze the findings alongside the values of the field. The research had three phases:

- 1) The first phase of the study was a qualitative exploration of the websites of MA programs in Writing Studies through a focused content analysis centered around research.
- 2) The second phase was a quantitative survey instrument created and distributed to English Graduate Program Directors, research methods professors, or another appropriate person at programs that have an MA in Writing Studies. This survey addressed how MA programs are preparing and developing MA students as researchers and included questions about what types of research MA students are doing.
- 3) The third phase was the converging of the previous two phases. The findings from both phases were synthesized to address how MA programs are preparing MA students to be

researchers and then made recommendations for programs and future research in Writing Studies (with future research needing to include MA/PhD student voices).

In the remainder of this chapter, I will review the existing literature, demonstrating a lack of scholarship in this area, and then in the next chapter I will outline my methods section which will present the methodology and methods of this study.

### **Review of the Literature**

In the following review of the literature I map out the following threads:

- 1) The purpose of an MA Degree
- 2) The purpose of an MA Degree in English
- 3) The State of the MA in Writing Studies
- 4) Defining Scholarship and Research in Writing Studies
- 5) Recent Research in Technical Communication about Graduate Students as Researchers and Professionals
- 6) Research from Other Disciplines about Developing Graduate Students as Researchers and Professionals

By laying out these specific threads of inquiry, I first analyze how master's degrees have been analyzed and theorized overall through the Lumina Foundation, a nonprofit organization, and then how the master's degree in English specifically has been discussed or theorized by different scholars, and then round out this discussion through scholarship by Writing Studies researchers, including concerns about curricular offerings in MA programs. This scholarship at times redefines and reimagines what an MA program in Writing Studies can be, adapting it for a local context to better serve MA students for their next step. However, as I have argued before, one way of serving MA students' transition to their next endeavor is through developing MA students as researchers. In the section "Scholarship and Empirical Research in Writing Studies" I define what the discipline of

Writing Studies considers research. Starting with a definition of research in the discipline helps provide context for assessing whether or not programs are training MA students as research practitioners. This discussion includes defining what is considered empirical research in Writing Studies and provides a loose and permeable boundary for further definition as discussions on what is and is not considered research are ongoing in the discipline.

Finally, I end this review of the literature with reference to a growing area of research: developing doctoral students as professionals and researchers. The literature in the section “Rumblings in Technical Communication and Other Disciplines” comes from Technical Communication, a subfield of Writing Studies, but also includes scholarship from disciplines like Education Administration, Education, and Nursing. These examples demonstrate recent attention has been paid to exploring how doctoral students are navigating their professional lives and how programs can help these students succeed. However, the use of the word graduate students should not be a synecdoche including MA students since not every MA student will become a doctoral student. Overall, weaving together these three threads will demonstrate a gap in the research about how MA programs are preparing students as researchers to prepare them for their next step, demonstrating an exigence for this study.

### **The Master’s Degree in General**

In considering the purpose of an MA degree, not just an English MA degree, I looked outside of Writing Studies to identify how organizations or other higher education focused departments conceptualize a master’s degree. The Lumina Foundation, a nonprofit organization working on providing United States citizens access to high quality postsecondary education, released their “Degree Qualifications Profile: A Learning Centered Framework for What College Graduate Should Know and Be Able to do to Earn the Associate, Bachelor’s or Master’s Degree” in October 2014. According to the Lumina Foundation, there are five primary learning categories or

frameworks (one has sub-categories) for higher education, and each degree level should offer specific learning opportunities for students to both learn and apply these frameworks:

- 1) Specialized Knowledge (14),
- 2) Broad and Integrative Knowledge (15),
- 3) Intellectual Skills (16-18)
  - a) Analytic Inquiry
  - b) Use of information resources
  - c) Engaging diverse perspectives
  - d) Ethical reasoning
  - e) Quantitative fluency, and
  - f) Communicative fluency.
- 4) Applied and Collaborative Learning (18), and
- 5) Civic and Global Learning (19).

These specific frameworks include theoretical and practical elements which the Lumina Foundation encourages programs to use to assess whether the degree programs offered are meeting the needs of modern students. While these frameworks may slightly resemble frameworks and education standards used in K-12 public education like the Common Core State Standards, the Lumina Foundation argues the frameworks are

[N]ot [attempting] to ‘standardize’ U.S. degrees. The [Degree Qualifications Profile] recognizes the role and responsibility of faculty to determine both the content appropriate to different areas of study and the best way to teach that content. Instead, the [Degree Qualifications Profile] describes generic forms of student performance appropriate for each degree level through clear reference points that indicate the incremental, integrative, and cumulative nature of learning. (6)

These frameworks offer a scaffold for which programs can compare current curricular offerings, student learning and experience outcomes, and even culminating project offerings.<sup>1</sup> In these frameworks there are mentions of research, even if the word empirical research or qualitative research is not explicit. For example, in the section “Specialized Knowledge,” the first bullet point for master’s level students is “Elucidates the major theories, research methods and approaches to inquiry and schools of practice in the field of study” (14). And a subpoint in the section “Applied or Collaborative Knowledge” states, “Designs and implements a project or performance in an out-of-class setting that requires the application of advanced knowledge gained in the field of study to a practical challenge” (18) which suggests a completion of a research project or research thesis designed by the master’s student, either individually or in collaboration with others. Finally, the Lumina Foundation recommends “Quantitative Fluency” as a needed “Intellectual Skill;” however, there is no mention of qualitative fluency. For Writing Studies, quantitative fluency could be translated into data fluency, which would include the various research methods and methodologies common in the field.

While these expectations are outlined by the Lumina Foundation for master’s level students, I was not able to find any type of scaffold or framework for graduate education in Writing Studies, especially for MA programs or student outcomes; therefore, I think the Lumina Foundation’s frameworks can be a starting place when discussing the discipline-wide purpose of the MA degree, especially as scholars are starting to ask the overall question, “What is the purpose of an MA degree in English or Writing Studies?”

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<sup>1</sup> While I do not think scholars in Writing Studies would disagree with these frameworks, I do think that “Quantitative Fluency” would look different for Writing Studies. A possible offering would be “Data Fluency” which would allow for a broader understanding of the word data in terms of research conducted in Writing Studies.

## The MA Degree in English

In the edited collection from 2017, *Degree of Change: The MA in English Studies* edited by Margaret M. Strain and Rebecca C. Potter, different scholars discuss the current reality of the MA in English. Chapters include a program designing a new MA track in rhetoric and composition in addition to their creative writing and literature concentrations (Miller and Carter); the need for an intentional curricular redesign and response to the “academic capitalism” of the New Economy (Mossman); the development of a Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages MA program in an English department (Park and Amevuvor); the experiences of MA graduate students in a writing studies program who did not pursue doctoral education but are still using their MA degree (McGee, Burns, Wells, Clemens, and Hudson); and how different programs are responding to local exigence for the degree, echoing the call and challenge of Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon’s 2012 article “Advancing by Degree: Placing the MA in Writing Studies,” which will be further analyzed in the subsection “The MA Degree in Writing Studies” (Ching, Lockhart, and Roberge; Blair; Adkins; Fox and Lovejoy; FitzGerald and Singley; and Beasley). Overall, the book addresses the larger question of whether or not the MA degree in English has, or should, become a more professionalizing degree—one better suited to the economic needs of both communities and graduate students.

In their introduction, Margaret M. Strain uses the Modern Language Association’s Ad Hoc Committee on the Master’s Degree’s report, “Rethinking the Master’s Degree in English for a New Century” from 2011 to explain “that ‘close to half (49.1%) of all those teaching English in colleges and universities hold a master’s as their highest degree’ (3). Those statistics suggest that the MA continues to hold its stature as a professionalizing degree within the academy—and beyond it” (as quoted in Strain xii), laying the foundation for a need for scholars to question and critique the current role of MA English programs. Strain later argues writing studies programs have been created

to address the need for professionalization: “Students and prospective employers see a ready market for graduates prepared to move into writing-related and teaching careers. Coursework in writing studies, notwithstanding its other merits, is perceived as a pragmatic, even advantageous training for one’s career” (xviii). To Strain, this may reflect a growing trend in the job market where graduates with a rhetoric and composition background may fare better in the hiring process than literature graduates (see Rebecca Potter’s chapter “But Can You Teach Composition? The Relevance of Literary Studies for the MA Degree” for a discussion about community colleges preferring faculty with rhetoric and composition backgrounds to literature or literacy studies). Therefore, to Strain, a Writing Studies MA degree is a professional degree not a purely academic degree like a traditional MA degree in English or literacy studies or literature, although they do clarify writing students MA programs do have “other merits” which goes unaddressed and unexplained. Therefore, the question remains: What are these “other merits” Strain mentions?

In the chapter, “From Political Constraints to Program Innovation: Professionalizing the Master’s Degree in English,” Kaye Adkins discusses the development of a Masters of Applied Arts in Written Communication at their institution. The focus on an MAA instead of an MA “means that students graduate with a practical degree that enhances their ability to advance their careers. The core was designed to prepare students for supervisory or administrative work, as well as to build a foundation for applied research and practice in the general field of written communication” (85). Therefore, to Kaye and others in their program, the degree is a practical degree, which is designated by the MAA instead of a traditional MA. However, Mark Mossman argues in their chapter, “Academic Capitalism, Student Needs, and the English MA” that the MA degree overall should be redesigned to fit the neoliberal New Economy. Mossman argues that, “The English MA should be rebuilt in curricular content so that it is organized primarily around a pedagogy of skill sets that can legitimately radiate out into other areas. In its function as a terminal credentialing structure, I am



arguing for a degree that possesses a professionalism that differs from such credentialing degrees as the MBA or the MAT” (54) and then offers different professional skills and values an English MA degree should/could offer:

Ours will be a professionalism that privileges issues of social justice and the development of skills that speak to the larger social values our discipline already engages and has engaged for a long time—skills and values that engage, for example, sustainability and ecological issues and thus can now prepare graduates for work in emerging green industries; or skills and values that engage gender, race, sexuality, disability, and other kinds of somatically oriented issues that thus can now prepare students for possible careers in various kinds of social service and health industries; or skills and values that engage those overarching pedagogical and larger classroom issues that can now prepare students for possible careers in secondary or postsecondary education; or skills and values that require deep analysis of cultural constructs—like race—and that can now prepare students for possible careers in law and other discourse- or public policy-oriented endeavors; or skills and values that encompass the work on texts, new media, and new technology issues that can now prepare students for possible careers in emerging New Economy sectors. (54)

These skills and values may address some of the “other merits” Strain mentions in their introduction to the book; however, Mossman offers no concrete steps or solutions to how an MA program can be developed which will offer students these values and skills, although Mossman does offer some guiding principles, like extending the MA degree to three years, a program can use at the end of the chapter which may help programs develop this type of utopic professional degree program which Mossman wants to see.

In their chapter “Boundary Crossings and Collaboration in a Graduate Certificate in Teaching Writing,” Steve Fox and Kim Brian Lovejoy discuss the development of a 20-hour graduate certificate offered to non-degree seeking students at their university. The program was designed in collaboration with the National Writing Program Summer Institute their program offers to teachers in their metropolitan area. The goals for the certificate are to “understand language and literacy from a theoretical and historical basis; acquire a reflective, research-based approach to major issues in teaching writing; and develop and articulate an informed, practical pedagogy for teaching writing” (108), which includes an emphasis on teacher research. Fox and Lovejoy write, “[W]e want

students not only to read research and theory, but also to begin doing research and theory themselves. In the core [writing studies] course we begin by asking students to think about the kinds of research done in this field and then invite them to step into the research waters by writing a research proposal or doing a small-scale research project—say, examining the way ‘writing’ is talked about in university documents. In the National Writing Project Summer Institute, we introduce teachers to classroom research, ask them to develop a small-scale, focused teacher research proposal, and urge them to implement the proposal in their classrooms that fall” (113). Therefore, to Fox and Lovejoy, they see teacher- or action-research as an important component of the graduate certificate because it can be a way for students to become “reflective scholars” (106) who “see their work as action research, as praxis” (107).

Finally, in the chapter, “‘There and Back Again’: Programmatic Deliberations and the Creation of an MA Track in Rhetoric and Composition,” Hildy Miller and Duncan Carter present five questions their program asked when creating a new rhetoric and composition track for students:

- 1) How do faculty’s particular strengths and interests shape the program?
- 2) How will the new program mesh with disciplinary concerns within rhetoric and composition and English studies?
- 3) How does the program fit with department mission and identity?
- 4) How does the program fit with departmental curricula and institutional goals?
- 5) How will the program meet students’ professional needs in our local context? (157-158)

These questions serve as both a guiding heuristic for readers interested in creating a rhetoric and composition track on their own campus, but also as an overview of their chapter. These questions are helpful, but I was unsatisfied with their overview of “disciplinary concerns within rhetoric and composition and English studies” (157). The authors start this specific sub-section of the chapter with describing their analysis of other MA programs with a rhetoric and composition track and then explain they had to make the decision to either align (or partner) with the creative writing track or

the literature track already present on their campus. The authors make the decision to align with the literature track but are then faced with some resistance from the literature faculty. Miller and Carter do not offer any disciplinary specifics or concerns related to rhetoric and composition, unless the disciplinary concern is related to the history of writing studies programs coming out of literature and other English programs, which begs a larger disciplinary question, “Should Writing Studies programs be located in English departments overall?” This question is not one I can answer, but if the Writing Studies programs housed in particular English departments are seen as professional degrees and are responding to economic prospects, then how will this impact Writing Studies as a discipline and could this diminish the research being done about writing in general.

### **The MA Degree in Writing Studies**

Narrowing the scope from English to Writing Studies, few researchers have theorized the purpose of the MA program or researched the current reality of MA programs in Writing Studies. In the existing scholarship, the authors goals are to better understand 1) The current state of the MA in Writing Studies (Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer; Dunn and Mueller), 2) how the MA fits within the discipline of Writing Studies (Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon), and 3) how the MA can best be changed/developed to meet the needs of a geographic area (Hunter, Giddens, and Walters; Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon; Knievel and Sheridan-Rabideau).

In 2004, Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer surveyed the MA in Writing Studies (which they called Rhetoric and Composition), basing their survey off of the 1999 survey of doctoral programs in Writing Studies (Brown, Jackson, and Enos qtd. in Brown, Torres, Enos and Juergensmeyer). The authors demonstrated a need for the study by noting no other research had been conducted at the MA level for Writing Studies. Overall there were 179 doctoral programs at the time of the survey, and at least 216 MA only programs (6), but only 55 programs responded to the survey (7). In their findings, about 30% of students in an English MA program were in a rhetoric

and composition track (9). In the list of MA programs, 57 programs are included. The survey asked programs to include a program description/mission statement, core faculty, job placement information, admissions criteria (ranked by importance), current enrollment numbers, a brief overview of the curriculum, financial support, and self-reported program strengths. In their discussion of the results from the survey, Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer mention the difficulty of discussing curricular matters. They note most programs

[C]ontinue to offer core courses in areas such as the history of rhetoric, research methods, theories of professional communication, technical editing, rhetorical criticism, and pedagogy, they also appear to be developing courses in response to a contemporary context—the theoretical trends, cultural shifts, technological innovations, institutional pressures, and workplace realities. (10)

The authors do not offer any additional comment except to say this shows “the exceptional diversity that exists within the field of study” but do not interrogate how the curricular offerings of a program can impact students (10). However, their use of the word “continue to offer core courses” reflects an assumed understanding that there are specific courses that should be offered in an MA Writing Studies program. It is this assumed understanding needs to be addressed.

In considering the purpose and curricular concerns of an MA degree, Peter Vandenberg and Jennifer Clary-Lemon’s 2010 article, “Advancing by Degree: Placing the MA in Writing Studies,” traces the history of the MA in Writing Studies and notes the lack of attention paid, specifically in scholarship, to the MA in Writing Studies. The authors argue that the discipline has considered the MA a mere stepping stone to the PhD, even though MA students “outnumbered doctoral students three to one, with one-third of all master’s students nationwide enrolled in master’s-focused institutions” (Brown “Data Sources: Trends” 3 qtd. in Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon 264). The authors’ overall argument is the MA needs to be researched more thoroughly because the MA in Writing Studies can best reflect the situated and rhetorical (read: exigent) nature of a program: MA programs can best respond to growing needs of a community and a program, including coursework

in “editing, grant writing, professional writing..., multimedia production and web authoring, technical writing, information design, and organizational writing” (267). The authors use the example of Mike Knievel and Mary Sheridan-Rabideau from the University of Wyoming, who redesigned their MA in Writing Studies to best serve the state of Wyoming by including coursework to respond “to the realities of a regional job market with few diversified industries” (270). Vandenberg and Clary-Lemon thus argue for a redefinition of the MA in Writing Studies, one that does not simply exist as a steppingstone for a PhD in Writing Studies.

This reimagining of the MA in Writing Studies is echoed by Susan Hunter, Elizabeth Giddens, and Margaret Walters in their article, “Adding Value for Students and Faculty with a Master’s Degree in Professional Writing.” The authors “discuss the benefits an interdisciplinary professional writing program has generated for students (in terms of knowledge, habits of mind, and developing careers) and for faculty” (154). The authors position a professional writing degree as a beneficial and practical degree, situating students in practices they will need following matriculation, specifically elevating a professional writing degree over English degrees in literature or MFAs in creative writing (160). The authors interviewed fifteen graduate and advanced students, asking them “what has helped them learn, improve, and achieve as writers” (162). The authors then analyzed the responses and created a list of habits of mind for successful graduate students, including: “Persevere, Attempt challenges, Embrace learning, Exhibit keen interest in subject, Collaborate, Understand how to write in complicated contexts, Respond positively to critique, [and] Engage in self-reflection” (Table 2: Habits of mind and their definitions 166). These habits of mind are integral for students to be successful, not only in their professional writing MA program, but also for their next steps in industry. The authors have situated their MA as a professional degree, which not only complicates the MA to PhD pipeline, but allows for the MA to be reimagined as a sole, and possibly terminal site of learning and engagement.

Finally, in the “Report on the 2012 Survey of Programs,” the Master’s Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists, headed by John Dunn and Derek Mueller, attempted to update Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer’s 2004 survey with two primary goals: “to compile an accurate roster of programs nationwide offering master’s level training specific in writing studies and related fields, as well as to document the nature of these programs with both quantitative and qualitative descriptors” (1). Overall, 82 out of 179 institutions that offer an MA in 2011 in Writing Studies participated in this survey. Responses indicated where MA students came from, with most students being local or regional (8) and where MA students went after their time in the program, with most students pursuing a non-academic career, an academic career teaching in a community college, and further graduate study (16). As this study shows, students are using the MA degree as a bridge to their next opportunity; therefore, a clear understanding of the curriculum in an MA program is needed to highlight the transfer of skills and habits of mind to a graduate student’s next step.

### **The MA Degree and Research**

In the “Afterword” to the book, *Degree of Change*, Adam Komisaruk wrestles with the shifting tide of professionalization of the MA degree in English. Using the MLA’s ADE Ad Hoc Committee on Master’s Degree’s report, Komisaruk notes, “the two most common courses required of all or most [English] MA students are Research Methods (63.6 percent) and Literary Theory (51.4 percent) (23), and [the report] asks, nonrhetorically, whether these are ‘the most urgent need in the MA curriculum especially for those students who do not pursue the PhD’ (10)” (as quoted in Komisaruk 259). While the committee’s report is on English MA degrees in general, not just Writing Studies, Komisaruk does not offer an answer to whether or not these courses are needed for MA students, especially if they are not going to pursue a doctoral degree after their time in an MA program; nor does Komisaruk mention whether getting rid of these types of courses will result in a more

professional degree and whether or not this would be beneficial for MA students. As I mentioned in chapter one, my intuition tells me there is value in learning how to do research in an MA program, regardless of a student's future career goal/aspiration.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, when the curriculum of MA programs is discussed, I believe the discussion needs to examine the transferability of values and skills learned in an MA program to future endeavors (echoing Mossman's values and skills) while balancing this concern with an understanding that habits of mind are not always quantifiable.

### **Scholarship and Empirical Research in Writing Studies**

As noted, one of the ways an MA program can help graduate students enact habits of mind and become effective teachers at all levels is through the analysis of existing research and the practice of conducting research. However, a clear definition of what Writing Studies means when discussing the word "research" is needed before moving forward.

In the discipline of Writing Studies, scholarship and research is varied, as seen in the CCCCs statement, "Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing and Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Chairs," which was last updated March 2018. The CCCCs position statement broadly defines scholarship in Writing Studies, "including but not limited to historical or theoretical research, pedagogical studies, assessment of writing pedagogies and programs, rhetorical analysis of traditional and new media texts, linguistic analyses, studies of community and civic literacies, multimodal and digital research, and other creative and narrative genres" (para. 5). The important phrase in this overview is "including but not limited to" because as Katrina M. Powell writes in the chapter titled "Research" from *Keywords in Writing Studies*, "While it is clear that conflicts of what *research* is and what it means have been and continue to be a productive, driving force in writing studies, it is also clear that, no matter a scholar's particular approach to research, writing studies is preoccupied with what makes for 'good research' and the rhetorical nature of all research practices" (italics in original

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<sup>2</sup> As mentioned before, this claim is beyond the scope of this project but could be a future dissertation project!

157-158). This is an important distinction when considering the arguments made by Richard Haswell in their article “NCTE/CCCC’s Recent War on Scholarship” that advocates for replicable, aggregable, and data-driven (RAD) empirical research in Writing Studies to solidify the field’s place and permanence in academia. While Haswell’s RAD research has been incorporated into Writing Center scholarship, mostly by Dana Driscoll (Driscoll and Perdue “Theory, Lore, and More”; Driscoll and Powell; Driscoll and Perdue “Framework”; Simpkins and Schwarz), the impetus for incorporating RAD research in broader Writing Studies scholarship has been met with some resistance and redefinition.

In exploring this redefinition of Writing Studies scholarship, Kathleen Blake Yancey edited a Special Interest collection of scholarship in 2012 about research for *College Composition and Communication*, one of Writing Studies’ flagship journals. In their introduction to the journal issue, Yancey presents a list of questions released in the Call for Papers. These questions include “Discussion of what counts as methodology and of the relative merits of various methodologies, especially as keyed to different research questions;...Explication of a specific methodology and its value in a specific context and/or for specific purposes;...Differences and similarities in research methods as used in rhetoric and composition” (6). The issue includes four articles about archival research, articles about critical discourse analysis, ethnographies of institutions, and three “new methodologies: eye-tracking methodologies and purposes for them; data mining; and graphing of large data sets” (7). These methods are not explicitly RAD research, yet they are still considered empirical in the field of Writing Studies. Therefore, when discussing what counts as research in Writing Studies, a single definition would most likely be met with resistance. However, this is not to suggest that any scholar can call any project research. Research in Writing Studies is not limited to a Haswellian definition of empirical research.



For example, other researchers have attempted to define what counts in research in Writing Studies. In their collection *Writing Studies Research in Practice: Methods and Methodologies*, Lee Nickoson and Mary P. Sheridan define “research as [a] situated, systematic, and reflective investigation of literate activity with the goal of deepening our understanding of why, how, when, where, and what writers write” (1). The chapters in their book present a variety of research methods and methodologies, paying particular attention to “research approaches that have been historically important to writing studies research....research within traditional composition settings....[and] reconceptualizing what we consider traditional methodologies and sites of inquiry” (5). Nickoson and Sheridan’s embrace of traditional methods of research in Writing Studies echoes Yancey’s exploration of research in Writing Studies<sup>3</sup>. Nickoson and Sheridan’s echo Yancey’s description of a loose boundary drawn around researched as theorized and practiced by Writing Studies scholars. For example, in their introduction to the collection, Nickoson and Sheridan argue the “essays reflect not only a pushing against past research traditions but also an embrace of these traditions” by considering collaboration and “a heightened attention to activism and advocacy” (7-8). The methodologies and methods in their collection include traditional research methodologies such as narrative inquiry (Journet), quantitative data analysis (Haswell; Broad), and ethnography (Sheridan); however, these methodologies are re-seen through a critical lens (see McKee and Porter’s chapter “The Ethics of Conducting Writing Research on the Internet: How Heuristics Help” for a discussion about creating heuristics to conduct ethical research in online spaces, specifically considering the idea of anonymity, observing and interacting with vulnerable populations, and ethical researcher intervention). The authors of the chapters were asked to reflect and respond to the following question in their chapters:

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<sup>3</sup> Nickoson and Sheridan’s book was published a month before the *CCC* issue came out in 2012, so Nickoson and Sheridan’s book is not included in the *CCC* review article of resources for researchers in Writing Studies by Rebecca Ridley.

- How do they understand and come to writing research?
- What practical, theoretical, and ethical problems confront writing researchers today?
- What does one gain and lose from adopting a particular methodology?
- And, finally, what might researchers be overlooking, excluding, and silencing? (5)

These questions demonstrate a reflexive and reflective analysis of the methodologies and methods enacted in each scholar's research. While this practice is not unique to Writing Studies, its incorporation into a text that is attempting to be a methods text for the discipline demonstrates the ever-evolving definition of research.

Yancey's special journal edition of *CCC* and Nickoson and Sheridan's book are not the only spaces that attempt to identify and define the "State of Scholarship" in Writing Studies. In another loosely defined boundary in Writing Studies, the following fields/subfields/special interest areas of rhetoric, computers and writing, and Technical Communication have attempted to take pause to reflect on the "State of Scholarship" for each of their respective fields/subfields/special interest areas. Lynée Lewis Gaillet's *The Present State of Scholarship in the History of Rhetoric* is an updated edition (2010) of two previous editions from 1983 and 1990; however, the book serves as an annotated bibliography of sorts, compiling scholarship in rhetoric which intersects with Writing Studies in updated chapters. The scholarship present in the book ranges from rhetorical textual analysis studies to empirical research studies with students discussing rhetorical choices in their writing.

Jennifer Bowie and Heather McGovern's article from 2013, "De-coding Our Scholarship: The State of Research in Computers and Writing from 2003-2008" uses Haswell's call for RAD empirical research as a hinge in research in the field, exploring research that came before Haswell's 2005 call, and research following the call, in hopes of identifying how research changed in this period of time. Bowie and McGovern analyzed 289 articles and found "only 26.3% [of the articles] met our operational definition of [RAD] empirical research" (250-251). Additionally, the researchers

found textual analysis and discourse analysis as some of the most common forms of first and second round data analysis in the research, with interviews placing third, but at least 40% behind in frequency. While Bowe and McGovern mention Haswell's article as an exigence of their study, their results do not provide any insight if Haswell's call for RAD research in Writing Studies provoked more RAD empirical research in the field. In the field of Technical Communication, Ann Blakeslee and Rachel Spilka's 2004 article, "The State of Research in Technical Communication" synthesizes surveys of Technical Communication professionals, articles, chapters, and conference presentations to better understand how research is theorized and conducted in Technical Communication. Blakeslee and Spilka's article acts as a discussion about research and provides certain actions for the future of Technical Communication. The authors identify steps to take, including creating "a set of guidelines and standards for research in the field, a set of research questions that will be presented as most important for the field to investigate in the twenty-first century, [and] a plan for disseminating the set of guidelines and standards and the set of research questions to the field" (90). While Blakeslee and Spilka's article is not an empirical analysis of research like Bowe and McGovern, both sets of authors are looking to the future to better understand how research can further transform the discipline, which fits Haswell's call for more rigorous empirical study.

### **Rumblings in Technical Communication and Other Disciplines**

*Technical Communication.* Similar to Writing Studies in general, the subfield of Technical Communication has started to address the importance and presence of empirical research conducted by Technical Communication scholars (Melonçon and St. Amant). However, recent scholarship has also addressed how various programs are preparing graduate students as professionals in the field, including a special edition of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* in 2017 called "Failing Forward: Training Graduate Students for Research," edited by Rebecca Rickly and Kelli Cargile Cook. Articles in the special edition of the journal provide insight about professionalizing graduate

students to enter Technical Communication and how various programs are preparing graduate students to be researchers.

In their introduction to the edition, Rebecca Rickly and Kelli Cargile Cook discuss the messiness of research, and argue, “students benefit from conducting some substantial research before their dissertations—getting hands-on practice in learning how to wrestle big ideas into smaller, more focused ones, learning how to collect and analyze data, and learning that research almost never goes according to plan” (124). The authors comment on the design of their own research methods courses for graduate students and explain that graduate students benefit from conducting research for classroom purposes and going further than analyzing, discussing, and theorizing research, either through literature reviews or thesis/dissertation proposals. Overall, the authors are not discouraging literature reviews or thesis/dissertation proposals but argue that in order for graduate students to become professionals in the field, they must start to take on research before a dissertation.

In the remainder of the journal edition, various faculty and graduate students address the ways in which they have been introduced to research and how institutions provide opportunities for graduate students to become researchers. For example, at Michigan State University, the Writing, Information, and Digital Experience (WIDE) research center provides mentoring to graduate students, “[providing] a space to test [their] research and apply [their] pedagogy through enacting, embodying, and exploring research and mentorship” (Turner et al. 131). The article then provides five vignettes of graduate students’ involvement in the WIDE mentoring process, including new developments in online collaboration and implementation for graduate students (139-140). The mentorship is a program specific and scaffolded way of preparing graduate students in a supportive environment for both faculty and students as they navigate their positions as researchers.

In the article, “Helping Doctoral Students Establish Long-Term Identities as Technical Communication Scholars,” Keith Grant-Davie, Breeane Matheson, and Eric James Stephens look beyond the dissertation and attempt to identify ways to help graduate students on the job markets, specifically those in new tenure-track positions, establish their research agendas to find success as a Technical Communication scholar. In the article, “Cultivating Conditions for Access: A Case for ‘Case-Making’ in Graduate Student Preparation for Interdisciplinary Research,” Mark A. Hannah and Alex Arreguin present how they help Technical Communication graduate students prepare for interdisciplinary research, specifically with outside organizations through relationships, exigence, and personal interest. The authors do this through role-playing activities and modelling with existing relationships with outside organizations. In the article, “Graduate Students ‘Show Their Work’: Metalanguage in Dissertation Methodology Sections,” Kate L. Pantelides read 14 award-winning dissertations from the field of Technical Communication to better understand how certain institutions prepare new scholars. Pantelides identified metalanguage (from Cheng and Steffensen) in dissertations, including “(a) self-mentions of the author as researcher...; (b) explicit descriptions of the research process...; and (c) demonstrations of the constructedness of the dissertation itself” as a way to “[tell] the story of the research process” (198). Pantelides encourages graduate students to analyze dissertations to further their genre knowledge of the dissertation, paying particular attention to the inclusion and use of metalanguage. Finally, the article, “Quantitative Data Analysis—In the Graduate Curriculum,” by Michael J. Albers addresses how quantitative data analysis is taught in graduate courses in Technical Communication. Albers argues that Technical Communication programs are not preparing students to conduct quantitative data analysis, which results in a lack of quantitative data analysis in Technical Communication as a whole. Their article offers a set of heuristics in identifying ways to incorporate quantitative data analysis in Technical Communication

programs, but these practices can only be enacted by programs interested in incorporating quantitative data analysis into their programs.

While this special issue of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication* highlights ways programs can, or should, prepare graduate students as researchers, the findings are left to individual programs and professors/administrators to enact. This special issue was published in 2017; therefore, the discussion is still relatively recent in Technical Communication. However, Technical Communication is not the first discipline to concern itself with developing graduate students as researchers.

*Other Disciplines.* In journals such as *Qualitative Inquiry*, *Qualitative Research*, and the *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, there has been scholarship that addresses creating and professionalizing graduate qualitative researchers. The fields represented in these articles are Education Administration (Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, and Militello), Education (Tieken; Blair et al.; Wang), and Nursing (West et al.; Hunt, Mehta, and Chan). In the article, “The Wanderer, the Chameleon, and the Warrior: Experiences of Doctoral Students of Color Developing a Research Identity in Educational Administration,” Elizabeth Murakami-Ramalho, Joyce Piert, and Matthew Militello address how graduate students of color craft and examine their research identity through the metaphors of “a wanderer, a chameleon, and a warrior” (Abstract). Using narrative as a method, the authors address their own identities as graduate researchers, but concluded, “We discovered that a research identity is not ‘created’ in the doctoral program. We did not come to the academy as *tabulas rasas* (blank slates); rather, we discovered through these portraits that, as students of color, we entered the academy with the seeds of our research identity already sown” (italics in original 831). The authors were able to see how their programs were opportunities for them to develop the skills they already possessed, complicating the notion that programs are the place in which research identities are crafted and created.

In connection to Murakami-Ramalho, Piert, and Militello's experiences of becoming researchers, other education graduate students have described their own processes of becoming. In Mara Casey Tieken's article, "The Distance to Delight: A Graduate Student Enters the Field," Tieken describes the process of entering the field of research, in their case, entering small rural towns in Arkansas as a researcher from Harvard. Tieken uses autoethnographic research to describe the process of conducting field work, drawing connections between their own history and their experiences in field work: navigating the various ways they interact with these small communities. Fei Wang's article, "Challenges of Learning to Write Qualitative Research: Students' Voices," comes from Wang's dissertation. In a collection of four case-studies, "two American students who are native speakers of English and two Asian students who are non-native speakers of English," (11) Wang found:

- (a) New students may question the very validity of qualitative research
- (b) New students need to practice a step-by-step procedure in analyzing qualitative data
- (c) New students need to learn to present findings argumentatively, and
- (d) New students need to build up disciplinary knowledge. (11).

While this list is not surprising, Wang recommends "guided and mentored practices" to better prepare doctoral students in education programs, regardless of language ability (12). Finally, in Blair et al.'s article, "Our Journey to Becoming Ethnographers: An Exploration of Rhetorical Structures as Lived Experiences," the authors describe the various practices faculty have doctoral students do as the doctoral students prepare to conduct ethnographic research in their Language and Literacy Doctoral Program at the University of Alberta. Doctoral students write collaboratively, engage in readers theater (to play act the theoretical framework within ethnography), and presented at conferences through the medium of readers theater as a reflexive understanding of ethnography.

These doctoral students were co-participants with faculty in this collaborative inquiry, demonstrating a way graduate students can work with faculty in crafting their skills and identities as researchers.

This understanding of developing graduate researchers through collaboration can also be found in the Health Science fields. West et al.'s article, "Enlivening a Community of Authentic Scholarship: A Faculty-Mentored Experience for Graduate Students at the 2016 Qualitative Health Research Conference," documents a research inquiry where ten participants, six graduate students and four faculty, used reflective journals in conjunction with a paired mentoring program at the 2016 Qualitative Health Research Conference. The authors analyzed these journals after the conference ended and found graduate students were navigating their roles as new researchers and students through affective lenses, particularly in a field where many students are professionals before becoming graduate students. The researchers' findings address how graduate students in the health science fields rely on collaboration with mentors and faculty to accept their new roles as novices, which happens best through vulnerability and honesty, and more importantly, not only through coursework and doing research for a dissertation. In conclusion, the authors argue their findings "challenge the current emphasis on individual approaches to graduate education and illustrate a need to develop social learning experience outside the boundaries of course and thesis work" (12). Finally, in Matthew R. Hunt, Anita Mehta, and Lisa S. Chan's editorial, "Learning to Think Qualitatively: Experiences of Graduate Students Conducting Qualitative Health Research," the authors are all graduate students using qualitative research in the health sciences, which has predominantly used quantitative research methods. The authors explain various ways that qualitative research differs in the field of health sciences and encourage future researchers to

- Develop a support network
- Pace yourself comfortably
- Value your individuality: Resist comparing yourself with others



- Do not let your project consume you: Maintain your identity
- Celebrate those “oh yeah!” and “aha!” moments [and]
- Train yourself: Develop your knowledge and skills as a researcher. (133-134)

Similar to the list found in Wang’s article, this set of suggestions/encouragement from Hunt, Mehta, and Chan may not be new to most researchers/faculty; however, they are useful reminders for researchers and faculty who may assume graduate students already know and understand these tenets.

### **Gap in Research**

Overall, the question of developing and helping graduate students grow as researchers has been or is currently being addressed in disciplines outside of Writing Studies. Fields such as Educational Leadership, Education, and the Health Sciences are exploring what it means to develop practices as disciplines in helping students navigate their new roles as professionals and researchers. Additionally, there has been work conducted in Technical Communication and Technical Writing that addresses the idea of research identity and graduate students; however, the conversations primarily focus on PhD or doctoral programs.

As evident in the existing scholarship, there is not a clear and defined picture of how the MA in Writing Studies helps prepare MA students as researchers, regardless of their future. Nor has there been a concerted effort to address the curriculum of MA programs in Writing Studies. To better understand how MA students are being prepared as professionals, both for academic purposes or non-academic purposes, this study will address how MA programs are preparing their students to become researchers by exploring what kinds of support and guidance MA students receive, either through coursework, mentorships/assistantships, or through the actual research conducted by MA students.

## Chapter 2 - Methods

As Peter Smagorinsky claims in their paper, “The Method Section as Conceptual Epicenter in Constructing Social Science Research Reports,” the methods section is where a researcher can make their results more trustworthy by being explicit with the reader what the researcher’s theoretical framework, methodology, and methods are for the purpose of the study. Smagorinsky’s argument is a result of their experience as a journal editor and their argument addresses the methods section as a place to discuss “the methods of collection, reduction, and analysis” (392), and needs “to be clearly aligned with the framing theory and the rendering of the results” (392). Therefore, the methods section of this chapter is explicit in providing a theoretical framework of my topic, a discussion about the methodology of the study, the methods being used including defining a population and sample, an overview of the coding schemes, a brief discussion of the data analysis procedure, considerations of reliability and validity, and finally, a presentation of the initial limitations of the study.

The overall framework, including rationalizations for the methodology and methods of the study, are lightly modeled on Stephen Grover’s dissertation, “Preparing Graduate Teaching Assistants to Teach Writing Online: A Nationwide Assessment of Research and Practice,” which was completed in 2017. Grover’s dissertation provides a small snapshot of a currently under examined and under-represented area of research. Therefore, Grover used an exploratory mixed methods research design to better understand the current reality of graduate teaching assistant preparation when teaching online writing courses. Overall, Grover’s blend of qualitative and quantitative data, while not entirely comprehensive as their title suggests, is a way to at least initiate a scholarly conversation that has not been thoroughly addressed in the existing literature. While this study’s design was a convergent mixed method, the emphasis on connecting qualitative and quantitative pieces of data match Grover’s desire to analyze an under-represented area of research.

### Worldview

This study's main goal was to address how MA programs in Writing Studies prepare graduate students as researchers, regardless of the student's future employment or academic trajectory. Therefore, the worldview of both the study and my position as a researcher while conducting this study was a pragmatic worldview. In their book *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, Richard Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark identify pragmatism as "typically associated with mixed methods research" (37) because "[t]he focus is on the consequences of research, on the primary importance of the questions asked rather than the methods, and on the use of multiple methods of data collection to inform the problems under the study" (37). While there is the inclusion of suggested future research to address gaps in the existing research to better situate the MA in Writing Studies, this study was not explicitly transformative because of my own position as a researcher: I was a graduate student who did not have the ability to enact change on a program level, let alone the disciplinary level. While mixed methods researchers have argued for combining worldviews through dialectical pluralism (Johnson and Stefurak as cited in Creswell and Plano Clark 41), the scope of this project and its intent did not have enough space to address how the MA can be changed to better prepare students for future endeavors when considering research. Therefore, my intent with this study, and the accompanying worldview, was pragmatic because

- 1) I wanted to assess the current reality of MA in Writing Studies in relationship to teaching and preparing research(ers),
- 2) There are multiple ways of knowing which influenced the overall design of this research study, including a qualitative, quantitative, and analysis component, and
- 3) The MA is offered to students as a practical tool as a way to achieve a next step, therefore the research reflects a pragmatic reality for MA students.

## Methodology

To examine a topic that has not been sufficiently addressed, researchers like Creswell and Creswell and Creswell and Plano Clark suggest using a mixed methods research (Creswell and Creswell 15; Creswell Plano Clark 67). Creswell and Plano Clark explain the various mixed methods designs in their book *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research, 3rd ed.* Creswell and Plano Clark argue for using convergent mixed methods design to “bring together the results of the quantitative and qualitative data analysis...[to be] compared or combined” (65). Creswell and Plano Clark argue a benefit of a convergent mixed methods study is the “intent of obtaining a more complete understanding of a problem” (65), especially as “[e]ach type of data can be collected and analyzed separately and independently” to better address the research question (72).

While Stephen Grover’s dissertation was a model and inspiration that lead to this research project, his use of exploratory mixed methods design would not be as appropriate for this study. Since the qualitative phase of this research study does not directly inform the quantitative survey instrument, I could not use the sequential nature of an exploratory mixed methods study. By conducting the qualitative and quantitative phases of this study concurrently, I was able to address the issue from two major vantage points: The online program descriptions from Writing Studies MA programs and Writing Studies Graduate Directors, research methods professors, or other appropriate persons in MA Writing Studies programs.

### Methods of Inquiry

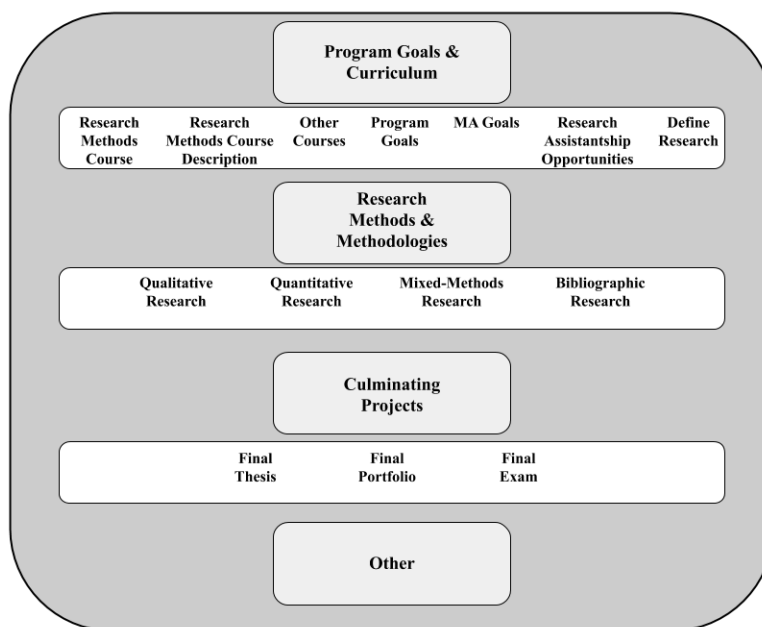
*Qualitative Phase.* In identifying the qualitative phase of the research, I relied heavily on content analysis of MA in Writing Studies program descriptions and used information from the following CCCC’s position statements: “Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies,” “Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing,” “Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Chairs,” and “Statement on Preparing

Teachers of College Writing.” I used the CCCCs position statements as a reference when referring to research. I first analyzed the CCCCs position statements to determine how the discipline categorizes, encourages, and defines research. The purpose of this initial analysis was to help clarify how the discipline of Writing Studies views research, which has been discussed in the earlier “Literature Review.”<sup>4</sup>

After analyzing the CCCCs position statements, I then used a holistic coding scheme (Saldaña 118) when conducting content analyses of MA in Writing Studies online program descriptions. Johnny Saldaña describes holistic coding as a process of applying “a single code to each large unit of data in the corpus to capture a sense of the overall contents and the possible categories that may develop” (118). Saldaña also notes a holistic “coded unit can be as small as one-half a page in length, to as large as an entire completed study” (118). For the purpose of this study, a holistic code was applied to a program’s self-composed description found on their website. The purpose of holistic coding in this study was to assess whether larger disciplinary goals were echoed in individual program descriptions. The coding schema includes these following codes and subcodes (Fig. 2.1):

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<sup>4</sup> I did not formally code these position statements and documents since they were a starting place/foundation to gauge how the field theorizes and discusses research. While coding the documents is beyond the scope of this project, it would be interesting to formally code these position statements to understand the language choices and descriptions of research methods and methodologies found in them.



**Figure 2.1: Holistic Coding Schema for Content Analysis**

In identifying the population, I compared the Rhetoric Society of America's list of Graduate Programs and the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists overview of MA programs, as described in the literature review. I used these two sources to identify the population because these two sources are not specifically designated as Technical or Professional Communication or Writing programs (see Yeats and Thompson for a list of Technical and Professional Communication Programs). This list provided a comprehensive population outline of MA programs in Writing Studies. After creating a comprehensive list, I categorized the programs into their designated Carnegie Classification, grouped the programs by Carnegie Classification, and assigned each program a number which was used for stratified random sampling (Creswell and Plano Clark 177). Categorizing the various programs into their designated Carnegie Classifications helped me construct a picture of the discipline of Writing Studies as evident in the various institution types and programs. This classification system was used to tally and identify the various institution types that offer an MA in Writing Studies. This is important because if there were more

R1 programs that offer an MA in Writing Studies than R2 or R3 institutions, then a true random sampling would not reflect the reality of the field. As Creswell and Plano Clark note, stratified random sampling allows a researcher to identify “certain characteristics represented in the sample that may be out of proportion in the larger population” which can then be used when conducting random sampling (177).

Overall, the scope of this project did not lend itself to generalizable data; therefore, I did not use probability sampling to determine generalizability (Grutsch McKinney 81). I used stratified random sampling to identify 30 programs with the aid of a random list generator (Random.org “List Randomizer”). First, I categorized the various institutions into their respective Carnegie classifications. Then I calculated the overall percentage of the type of programs, and then calculated that percentage if the overall number was reduced to 30 for the purpose of my content analysis (see Figure 2.2). I then entered the categorized programs (for example, Doctoral Research: Very High Activity or R1) into the random list generator and entered that random list into the random list generator a second time. Using the “Actual Number” as a guide, I then selected that number of programs from the randomized list (See Appendix A).

Carnegie Classification	Number of Programs	Percentage	Number for Study	Actual Number
R1:	39	31.2	9.36	9
R2:	37	29.6	8.88	9
D/PU or R3:	11	8.8	2.64	3
M1:	29	23.2	6.96	7
M2:	8	6.4	1.92	2
M3:	1	0.8	0.24	0
Total:	125	100		30

**Figure 2.2: MA Writing Studies Programs Organized by Carnegie Classification Including the Percentage and Number for this Study**

The 30 programs were then coded using holistic coding (Saldaña 118). For the purpose of this study, I designated my unit of analysis (Grutsch McKinney 128) as a variable unit, but each unit of analysis was not restricted to one specific holistic code. Therefore, if a program which will be explained in more detail in the content analysis chapter. Finally, the program descriptions were defined as any description of the program found on a program's online website, including alphabetic description and audio-visual description, and did not have to be restricted to the program's main webpage. This included sub-pages of a program's webpage that are visible on the main program webpage, including hover-over/click drop down menus, hyperlinks found on the webpage, or a subset of hyperlinks found on the webpage, usually on the sides, top, or bottom of the webpage. The program descriptions were saved as PDF documents and saved on my computer. I then combined the PDF documents from one program into a PDF document (one document for each program) and then holistically coded each document using a horizontal chart (the horizontal axis indicated the holistic codes; the vertical axis was programs. If a program had a designated holistic code, I included a quote or description from the program demonstrating the code. For an example, see Fig. 2.3). If the program description included audio-visual components, these were downloaded and then described in detail. When there were specific quotations or references to research, these were transcribed and time stamped.

Program Name	Program Goals and Curriculum	Research Methods and Methodologies	Culminating Projects	Other
R1 Program 1	"Develop Students as Researchers"	"Qualitative research methods including interviews..."		
R1 Program 2		"Students must create a quantitative survey instrument"	"MA Thesis requiring original research"	

**Figure 2.3: An Example of a Holistic Coding for the Study (These are not actual quotes)**



The data from the qualitative phase was analyzed as a whole and was compared to the information from the literature review and was then later compared to the quantitative phase of the study in the final analysis phase of the study.

*Quantitative Phase.* While conducting the qualitative phase of the research study, I built a survey instrument using the information from the CCCCs position papers about the nature of research in Writing Studies. The survey instrument included questions about MA program goals and program practice as they related to developing MA students as researchers. I used texts such as Creswell and Plano Clark's *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research*, Creswell and Creswell's *Research Design 5th Ed.*, Blair, Czaja, and Blair's *Designing Surveys: A Guide to Decisions and Procedures*, and Fowler's *Survey Research Methods 5th Ed.* to ensure the survey addressed the main concerns of the study.

The goal of the quantitative phase of the research study was specifically connected to the overall research questions of the study:

- 1) How are programs preparing MA students to be researchers,
- 2) Do the program goals align to the disciplines goals in relationship to research, and
- 3) What types of research are MA students conducting in their programs? (Either as evidenced by recent MA thesis/projects or self-reported data.)

The survey instrument was designed in the online Qualtrics survey program. My home institution provides access to Qualtrics for all faculty, staff, and students. The survey instrument included multiple choice, select all that apply, and text-entry questions. The survey was designed to take no more than fifteen minutes to complete.

After constructing the instrument, I conducted user-testing with Dr. Nicole Caswell, one of the co-directors of the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists (MDCWSS), Dr. Rory Lee, one of my committee members who used a survey for his dissertation research, and Dr.

Jackie Grutsch McKinney, my thesis advisor. Following the pilot testing, I made changes to the instrument and applied for IRB approval to send the survey instrument to MA programs.

The survey instrument was sent via email directly to current Graduate Program Directors in Writing Studies or a faculty member who had taught the Research Methods course for Writing Studies in the last three academic years, with the approved IRB number and a letter of intent. I identified current Graduate Program Directors or the Research Methods faculty through online program descriptions, double checking the MDCWSS contacts were valid. Using Stephen Grover's dissertation process as an example, I had the survey available for six weeks. I sent the survey instrument to every program director listed the day the survey instrument was published in Qualtrics. I sent a follow-up email 4 weeks after the survey was opened to "encourage a higher response rate (Couper 2008)" (as cited in Grover 60).

After the survey was closed, I analyzed the data collected from the surveys. For this analysis I relied on Richard Haswell's advice in their article, "Quantitative Methods in Composition Studies: An Introduction to Their Functionality," to identify "insights" and "transgression" about the current field of Writing Studies (188). Additionally, I used Creswell and Plano Clark's overview of analyzing and interpreting data in mixed method research (238-243). This included an initial analysis of the survey data on its own, including descriptive statistical analysis, since the project did not allow for probabilistic statistical analysis due to sample size and response rate. The open response data was not coded but was used in the rich description of this thesis (for an overview of thick versus rich description, see Stake 48-50).

*Analysis Phase.* This final phase of the research project, which is the discussion chapter, attempted to answer the following question: "Is the current state of MA student preparation for research aligned with the stated values and goals of the field?" The data from the first phase (qualitative) and the second phase (quantitative) were combined to present an overview of how MA students are being

prepared as researchers, and attempted to assess how programs are aligning, or not-aligning, to overall goals of the discipline. While some convergent mixed method studies are designed to offer practical steps for programs, this study provided future recommendations for research but did not have specific steps a program can take to better prepare MA students as researchers.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Due to the nature of this convergent mixed method study, the purpose of this study was not to be generalizable to all MA programs in Writing Studies. Therefore, in addressing the reliability and validity, various strategies have been included in the sections above with the attempt at making the methods explicit to the reader. Strategies like stratified random sampling, descriptive statistical analysis, and pilot testing are ways to help triangulate data, ensuring, or striving for, reliable and valid results. While there is no way to fully address how each MA student is being prepared as a researcher, the use of a convergent mixed method study helps to at least identify: “What is currently happening?” through the collection of qualitative and quantitative data. This will also be present in the following chapters of this thesis which will include the holistic coding findings from the qualitative phase of the study and the data from the quantitative phase of the study. Another reliability strategy used was making the survey tool available for future researchers, which is included as Appendix D to this thesis. This transparency was included in hopes of creating additional research tools, not just quantitative research instruments, to be used in Writing Studies to better understand the current and shifting realities of the field’s various concerns and research interests.

### **Limitations**

Overall, the scope of this research project was limited because of its purpose: To understand the current reality of MA students. One large limitation of the study was the absence of MA student voices, with the exception of my own. This was intentional because I was exploring how the discipline, but more specifically, how programs in the discipline of Writing Studies, are preparing

MA students as researchers. MA student voices were missing in this initial study because this study attempts to address a lack of attention being paid in the research when considering MA students as researchers and blossoming professionals.

Finally, the two data points collected for the study were limited. Online program descriptions may not be decided by Graduate Directors or faculty and staff in the programs. Faculty and staff may not be able to edit or access their online webpages; therefore, the information may not reflect the current reality of the programs' goals, courses offered, or positions available for prospective graduate students. Additionally, the survey participants may have had limited knowledge of the experiences and research endeavors of MA students, especially if the Graduate Director is not directly involved in the Writing Studies concentration/area, does not teach the Research Method course, and is not aware of the research projects and theses conducted by MA students at their institution. Even though the survey attempted to minimize this limitation by offering the option of having a faculty member who taught the Research Methods course in the last three years take the survey, I have no way of knowing if the survey participants had direct knowledge of the MA students in their programs.

### **Concluding Vignettes**

I. Before starting my MA program, I was a high school English teacher for three years and worked in after-school programming for two years. During my time in these positions I would talk with colleagues about what was working in their classrooms and programs, and we would share ideas/lesson plans/resources and even our frustrations and concerns about students. Even though I was going through a non-traditional teaching preparation program in my time as a teacher, it was these conversations with colleagues and other teachers that were most generative about what I could do differently in my classes. I didn't have an Education background, hence the non-traditional licensure program, so while I was teaching, I enrolled in a Graduate Certificate program at a regional

campus of a state college. The certificate was focused on rhetoric and composition and was designed to help K-16 teachers better teach and understand writing. I took courses in composition theory, grant writing, and even creative writing, but it was my research methods course that made the biggest impact on my teaching.

Through the course we were exposed to the research process, and in identifying a problem I wanted to research I started thinking about my own students. I knew they were taking state-mandated tests on iPads but I had never considered the impact of touchscreens on their writing practice. In our district professional development sessions, the school administration was quick to celebrate all the wonderful changes iPads would have on our classroom instruction. We were promised immediate engagement and enhanced learning opportunities for students. But I had never paused to think about the consequences of *how* students were writing, not to mention how their writing would have consequences when they took the state-tests. So, I designed a research inquiry to understand how iPads were impacting student writing. I went through a full IRB review since my participants were minors, and it was through this process that I began to reflect on other teaching practices. I am not claiming that my research study made any lasting impression on my students beyond my urging for students to use keyboards on the state-tests (I wouldn't feel comfortable noting any impressions or changes without a research inquiry to back up my claims!). But I do know that going through the research process was instrumental in helping me reframe and reimagine my own practice. Through the research process I was enacting habits of mind, even if I didn't have that particular vocabulary at the time. And I shared my results with colleagues and students. We talked through the impact of iPads (beyond the complains about students being able to access YouTube music videos) and discussed ways we could help students prepare for state-tests with an understanding of how they take the test can impact their scores.

I relate this story because this research project draws from this spirit of recognizing the importance of the research process and the way it can transform an individual teacher's praxis and can lead to generative discussions about their work. I recognize that not everyone is interested in creating a dissertation-level IRB approved longitudinal study; however, I do know anecdotally that even learning how to conduct a research inquiry is more than creating materials to be used for a conference presentation. Research skills are not limited to academia and learning how to do research can transform the lens through which a person sees the world. Therefore, the habits of mind and the skills I learned in that course transferred to my classroom practice and then transferred to my experiences in after-school programming. I was asking different questions because I had been taught how to ask different questions through that research methods course and through my own research inquiry.

**II.** In my time as an MA student, I have expressed an interest in pursuing a PhD in Writing Studies, and various faculty members from different institutions have said that I need to ask about the completion rate of PhD students in the programs I am exploring. When I asked if completion rates were a problem, a faculty member I was talking to said a number of PhD candidates leave without completing their dissertation because they aren't used to conducting and completing projects of this magnitude.<sup>5</sup> Pairing this with the discussion I mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, as masters projects are being condensed to materials that better resemble journal articles, the scope of a project can also be condensed. Therefore, when a doctoral student is preparing for their dissertation project, there is a chance they haven't had to write anything over 30-40 pages. I am not arguing that every MA student needs to conduct and complete an MA thesis of 100+ pages;

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<sup>5</sup> I want to note: Doctoral students may leave a program for personal reasons unrelated to the dissertation. Leaving a doctoral program does not automatically mean the student had difficulty with the dissertation or that they are an unskilled/inept researcher or academic.

however, I am arguing that practicing the skill of engaging in a sustained research project can be a step along the way towards successfully completing a dissertation.

As PhD programs wonder how to help doctoral students complete their program, it can be research inquiries and studies like this one that provide some insight into what foundation a doctoral student has before entering a program. These insights can provoke further questions and discussion about what an MA can do for a PhD student. But like I have mentioned earlier, not every MA student will pursue a PhD; therefore, a productivity oriented (read: capitalist) view of doctoral completion shouldn't be the main impetus for any programmatic change. Instead, programs should reflect on how they are helping MA students develop habits of mind, and as I have argued in this chapter, I believe training graduate students as researchers can be a way to accomplish this.

### **Chapter 3 - Content Analysis of MA Program Descriptions**

As outlined in the methods section of the first chapter, for the qualitative component of this convergent mixed-methods research inquiry, I conducted a content analysis of 30 Writing Studies MA program websites focusing on the concept of research. This type of content analysis allowed me to consider what language is present in online program descriptions that describe the role research plays in an MA degree for a program. I used online program descriptions because my intuition tells me prospective MA students will search for programs online before contacting faculty or graduate students at that program. Therefore, the program descriptions found online can be an opportunity for a prospective student to decide if the MA program could be the right fit for the student.

Even though program descriptions may be the first place a prospective MA student looks when exploring potential programs, I do want to make caveat: Many programs do not have control or easy access to their departmental website. Programs may be beholden to the marketing department, the IT department, or other institutional structures that prohibit a program from having direct control over published content found on their website. While there is no direct way of knowing whether or not a program has control over their website, the content still reflects the program and communicates values, priorities, program goals, curricular offerings, teaching assistant and graduate assistant opportunities, faculty members areas of research interests or expertise, future placement of graduates, and general information about the program, including where the program is housed within the university structure. Therefore, conducting this type of content analysis relied heavily on description and did not attempt to use a critical lens such as critical discourse analysis, critical race theory, or feminist theory in the analysis. Using this more general content analysis considers the reality for many website users: Prospective and current students can only use the information found on a website. While students may reach out to current faculty and students listed on a website, the information on the website will be the likely first stop before making contact.



Finally, I want to comment on the lack of particular institution names in this chapter and the use of the Carnegie Classification system in organizing the data. While Appendix A includes a list of programs used for the content analysis, I will not be referring to specific programs in the coding data or the discussion section. The purpose of the content analysis is not to highlight particular programs or try and pit two program descriptions against each other to determine efficacy. Instead, it is to understand how programs in Writing Studies are presenting information about research on online websites and webpages. Therefore, I will use examples and text from the content analysis, but I will not refer to specific programs by name. This is also why I am using the Carnegie Classification system. While I do not believe a specific program's R1 status makes it a stronger program than an M1 program, grouping the programs by institutional classification allows for a birds-eye view of the content analysis with a focus on the language found within each program type. While it could be presumed that R1, R2, and R3 institutions will most likely have a stronger reference to research-oriented activities and goals compared to the M1, M2, and M3 programs, this does not mean research designated programs are better suited for preparing MA students as researchers. Additionally, grouping the programs by their Carnegie Classification system allows for a stratified sampling and provides insight about how programs overall are presenting information about research in online spaces.

In identifying the population for the content analysis, I relied on the Rhetoric Society of America's list of Graduate Programs and the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists overview of MA programs, as described in the first chapter. I first identified each organization's Carnegie Classification based on the current Carnegie Classification: 1) R1: Doctoral Universities – Very high research activity; 2) R2: Doctoral Universities – High research activity; 3) D/PU: Doctoral/Professional Universities [what used to be called R3]; 4) M1: Master's Colleges and Universities – Larger programs; 5) M2: Master's Colleges and Universities – Medium Programs; and

6) M3: Master's Colleges and Universities – Smaller Programs (Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education “Definitions”). The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education website has a “Lookup” feature that provides the current Carnegie Classification of an institution. I organized the programs based on their Carnegie Classification to allow for a stratified random sampling of the population. Categorizing the various programs into their designated Carnegie Classifications helped me construct a birds-eye view of the discipline of Writing Studies as evident in the various institution types and programs. This classification system was used to tally and identify the various institution types that offer an MA in Writing Studies. This is important because if there were more R1 programs that offer an MA in Writing Studies than R2 or R3 institutions, then a true random sampling would not reflect the reality of the field. As Creswell and Plano Clark note, stratified random sampling allows a researcher to identify “certain characteristics represented in the sample that may be out of proportion in the larger population” which can then be used when conducting random sampling (177). Based on the overall number of MA programs, I identified the number of programs from each classification type as follows:

R1	R2	R3 or D/PU	M1	M2	M3
9	9	3	7	2	0

**Figure 3.1: Number of Programs Selected for Content Analysis**

I ran each list of program classifications through an online random list generator twice and then selected the programs from the final list (see Appendix A for the list of programs categorized by Carnegie Classification). For example, I selected the top nine R1 programs from the final randomized list.

After identifying the population, I collected the program descriptions. The online program descriptions were defined as any description of the program found on a program's online website including alphabetic description and audio-visual description and did not have to be restricted to the

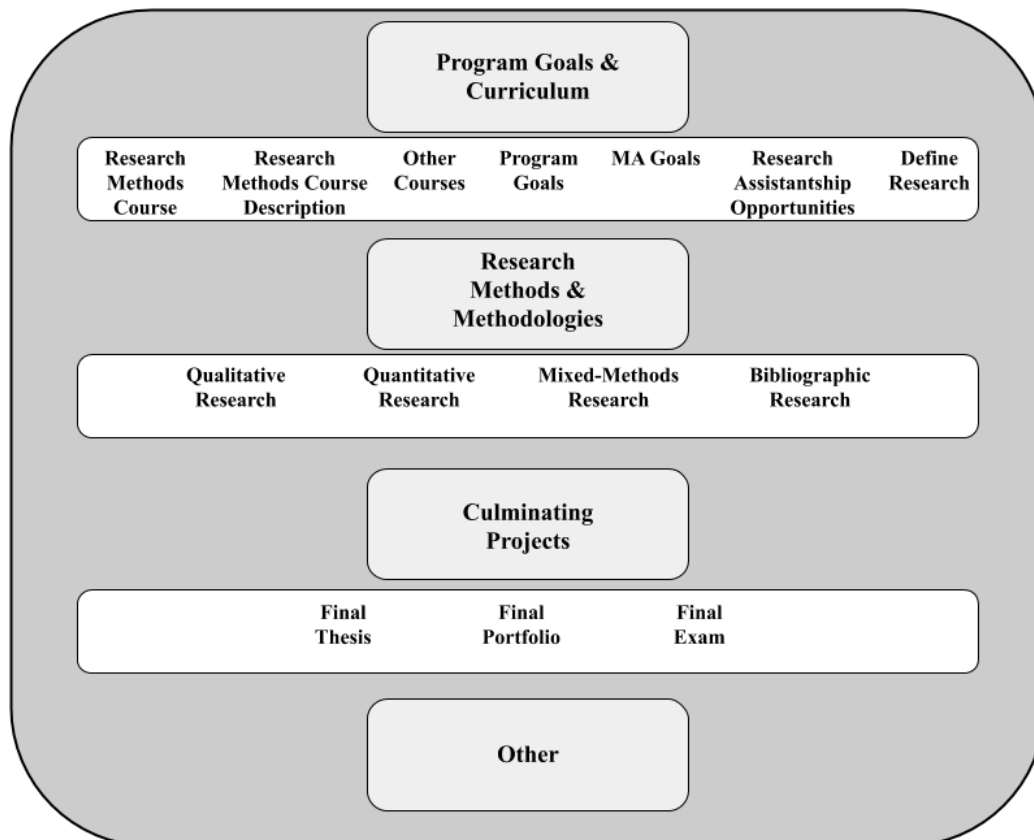
program's main webpage. This included sub-pages of a program's webpage, including hover-over/click drop down menus, hyperlinks found on the webpage, or a subset of hyperlinks found on the webpage, usually on the sides, top, or bottom of the webpage. If the program description included audio-visual components, these were downloaded and then transcribed and time stamped.

The various webpages were saved as PDF documents to my computer to ensure the raw data was in comparable forms and would preserve the original formatting of the text, visuals, and/or webpage. For example, if I was capturing a page on a website, I would save the page as a PDF document to my computer, and if the program included downloadable documents, I saved these as well. If the downloadable document was a Microsoft Word document or other text file, I saved these files as PDF to preserve the formatting of the document. Then I combined the respective files for each program into one PDF document using Adobe Acrobat. Therefore, I ended up with 30 PDF documents, one "combined" document for each program. The smallest document was 19 pages and the largest document was 225 pages, with an average of 69.2 pages per program description. All together I collected 2,099 pages of program description.

After collecting the program descriptions, I conducted two rounds of coding. The first round of coding included identifying any mention of research, either explicitly by using the word research or implicitly by using words such as theories, methods, methodologies, and others which will become evident in the coding schema found below. When I identified a code, I would copy and paste the text into a spreadsheet organized by program. After this round of coding was complete, I read through the data and started to organize the codes into categories based on the information found from the following CCCCs position statements: "Guidelines for the Ethical Conduct of Research in Composition Studies," "Principles for the Postsecondary Teaching of Writing," "Scholarship in Rhetoric, Writing, and Composition: Guidelines for Faculty, Deans, and Chairs," and "Statement on Preparing Teachers of College Writing." Using these position statements helped

me consider and clarify what would be considered research to Writing Studies scholars while also paying attention to matters of curriculum and program goals.

After the first round of coding, I organized the codes into the following categories and subcategories (see Fig. 3.2):



**Figure 3.2: Holistic Coding Schema for Content Analysis**

After developing my holistic coding schema, I re-read and re-coded the original documents. When I found an instance of a code, I copied and pasted the text into a spreadsheet. My unit of coding in this round of coding was variable. This means that if one sentence in a paragraph was about research, but the rest of the paragraph was not about research, then I just copy and pasted the text from that sentence. If two paragraphs were about research, like in the case of a research

methods course description, then I copy and pasted both paragraphs and considered this one instance of the code. I made sure to read through each document three times to ensure I did not miss a piece of data. After I collected the data, I analyzed the information both horizontally and vertically according to the spreadsheet. By analyzing the data horizontally, I focused on an individual program, considering how an individual program was presenting the term research in the program description. While I am not using this data in the content analysis to consider how programs differ from one another, it was an analytical exercise to be used again when I vertically analyzed the data. I then vertically analyzed the data by coding scheme/category, which would account for any coding data from all of the programs under a specific category and sub-category such as the category “Program Goals and Curriculum” or the subcategory “Research Methods Course Descriptions.” I read through the text collected from the various programs and considered differences and similarities in that particular sub-category. This type of analysis provides less of a program-specific description and provides more information about the entirety of all 30 programs which can inform a larger disciplinary conversation about program descriptions, the purpose of the MA degree, and how research is presented on these spaces.

## **Results**

In this section I will go through all four major categories and consider examples from the subcategories in that larger category. While I will not present every sub-category in the following section, I will make reference to appropriate subcategories when needed. When appropriate, I will use specific examples from the text but will refrain from naming the program or institution. At other times I will combine wording and text from multiple programs, to show differences and similarities. Below is a table of the tallied results of counted and collected codes for the larger theme “Program Goals and Curriculum” (see Fig. 3.3). In Fig. 3.3, each “✓” represents a code’s overall appearance in a program, regardless of how many times this code appeared for that particular institution.

Therefore, if a specific program had two instances representing “Research Methods Course Descriptions” (found under the heading “Programs Goals & Curriculum”), then the count for that program would still be 1. To see an overview of larger themes, see Figure 3.4 below. To see a complete list with subcategories structured by de-identified program, see Appendix B.

Program Goals & Curriculum								
Program Classification	Research Methods Course	Research Methods Course Description	Other Courses	Program Goals	MA Goals	Research Assistantships/Opportunities	Define Research	Combined Totals
R1-1	✓	✓		✓		✓		4
R1-2	✓	✓	✓	✓				5
R1-3	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	5
R1-4	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		5
R1-5	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
R1-6	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	7
R1-7			✓		✓			2
R1-8	✓	✓	✓		✓			4
R1-9	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
Total R1	8	8	7	6	8	3	2	42
R2-10								0
R2-11			✓	✓	✓	✓		4
R2-12			✓	✓	✓			3
R2-13								0
R2-14	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
R2-15	✓			✓	✓	✓		4
R2-16	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		5
R2-17	✓	✓		✓			✓	4
R2-18	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
Total R2	5	3	5	7	6	3	1	30
R3-19	✓	✓	✓		✓			4
R3-20	✓		✓	✓	✓			4
R3-21	✓		✓		✓	✓		4
Total R3	3	1	3	1	3	1	0	12

M1-22			✓		✓			2
M1-23	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		6
M1-24	✓	✓			✓			3
M1-25	✓		✓	✓		✓		4
M1-26	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
M1-27	✓		✓	✓	✓			4
M1-28				✓	✓			2
Total M1	5	3	5	5	6	2	0	26
M2-29				✓	✓			2
M2-30	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			5
Total M2	1	1	1	2	2	0	0	7

**Figure 3.3: An Overview of the Program Goals & Curriculum Code**

<b>Program Classification (Number of Programs)</b>	<b>Program Goals &amp; Curriculum (7)</b>	<b>Research Methods &amp; Methodologies (4)</b>	<b>Culminating Project (3)</b>	<b>Other (1)</b>	<b>Combined Totals</b>
Total R1 (9)	42	5	11	9	67
Total R2 (9)	30	4	12	6	52
Total R3 (3)	12	1	4	2	19
Total M1 (7)	26	1	10	4	41
Total M2 (2)	7	1	3	2	13
Combined Totals	117	12	40	23	192

**Figure 3.4: A Table Representing the Codes Collected and Counted**

### **Program Goals and Curriculum**

In considering program goals and curriculum, I looked for mentions of a research methods course, whether or not a methods course included a description, other courses offered that made reference to research, program goals, MA specific goals, if MA students are able to apply for

research assistantship opportunities, and if the program defines research. In this discussion I will consider the following, providing examples of each: Curriculum, Goals, Opportunities, and Outliers.

*Curriculum.* In considering curriculum, 21 out of the 30 programs offer and require a research methods course, and 1 program will offer a research methods course in the spring of 2021 but has not been offered for the past three academic years. In the descriptions of the required research courses, some programs are explicit in their methodology and method, like a program that includes an “Archival Research Methods” course and others that are general and include descriptions like, “Introduction to research in the field of composition and rhetoric,” “Students learn to discriminate among types of research, examine scholarship critically, and select appropriate research designs,” and “Study of research methodology for rhetoric and composition, focused on gathering primary and secondary source material, ethics, collaboration, and reporting findings.” One program in particular offers a research methods course but it does not count towards the credits needed for the degree. Another program offers multiple methods courses and students get to pick the methods course most appropriate to their research interests.

Many programs included other course offerings that made mention of research skills, projects, or course outcomes. These included references to specific types of papers like rhetorical analysis papers, conference length papers, and even the generic “research paper.” Certain course outcomes included reference to reading existing scholarship and research, therefore, the assumption stands that students will be exposed to different types of research through their course offerings. Specific programs mention courses that help graduate students become teachers, and a few of these programs included mention of conducting teacher research in these courses. Therefore, research is apparently embedded into these courses; however, there is very little mention of methodology and method when referencing these teaching courses.



*Goals.* Many programs include overall program goals and specific MA goals. Many program goals are general, including comments like “First and foremost, all our programs will in their different ways help you to sharpen your analytical skills and aptitudes, making you a more sensitive and effective interpreter and user of the English language....Second, they will help you to expand your capacity to digest and process complex bodies of information....Third, and perhaps most important, they will help you to refine your capacity for critical thought and reflection, in your personal, your professional, and your civic life.” This general program goal is usually then narrowed down in an MA goal, which can include reference to opportunities a person may have with an MA degree, including employment and academic opportunities. A few programs include references to where their MA graduates went after their time in the program. And some programs include testimonials from previous graduate students about their time in the program. Beyond the initial mention of the program or MA goals, I did not see a reference to these goals in the remainder of the data, and the program and MA goals were usually found on the first page of the website. Therefore, these goals may be tacitly implied to filter through the rest of the program’s website, however, it is up to a user to make this inference.

*Opportunities.* In considering opportunities for MA students, programs include information like students and faculty working together on research projects, opportunities for MA students to participate in research assistantships (9 programs overall out of 30), and working in reading groups that may or may not include a one-hour credit offering. These opportunities are not mandatory and are not offered to every student; however, they can be extra-curricular opportunities for MA students to gain research experience and practice either under the direct supervision of a faculty member, either in a structured or informal way, or in a group with other graduate students.

*Outliers.* Finally, in considering outliers, I included the “Define Research” subcategory here. Originally, I had included the subcategory with the “Other” category; however, similar to the

program goals and the MA goals, the way a program defines research may have tacit implications for how a program teaches MA students to be researchers. Overall, three programs included mention of how they as a program define research. One program identifies that various ways faculty and staff view research in their program, including examples like “We read widely, travel to archives, interview people, search databases, digitize texts, try out ideas in class, and by a hundred different paths find and create knowledge that we share with our colleagues, students, and the wider world through articles, essays, books, critical editions, social media, talks, digital projects, and virtually any means at our disposal.” Another program made mention of how faculty and students focus “in particular on how people learn how to write and develop a rhetoric as well as the ways that rhetoric and writing are used to make a difference in the world. [Their] approaches are often interdisciplinary and draw on historiographic, empirical, philosophical, and narrative ways of knowing.” Finally, the last program that defined research made mention of how the college where the program is located defines research: “Research It Starts with a Question: In the College of Arts and Sciences, our curiosity often gets the best of us. When it does, we start asking questions and these are the heart and soul of our research” and then goes on to include specific questions faculty members are currently asking in their research.

Program Classification (Number of Programs)	Research Methods Course	Research Methods Course Description	Other Courses	Program Goals	MA Goals	Research Assistantship Opportunities	Define Research
Total R1 (9)	8	8	7	6	8	3	2
Total R2 (9)	5	3	5	7	6	3	1
Total R3 (3)	3	1	3	1	3	1	0
Total M1 (7)	5	3	5	5	6	2	0
Total M2 (2)	1	1	1	2	2	0	0
Total (30)	22	16	21	21	25	9	3

**Figure 3.5: Program & Curriculum Subcategories**

### Research Methods and Methodologies

In considering research methods and methodologies, I looked for explicit mention of the four following types of research methods: Qualitative Research, Quantitative Research, Mixed-Methods Research, and Bibliographic Research. This information could be found in explicit research methods course descriptions, program goals, or in faculty research expertise or interests. While there were not any explicit mentions of mixed-methods research, this does not mean this methodology or method is not taught to students either in a research methods course, other courses, in their culminating projects, or through opportunities given to MA students. The most surprising piece of data here is the amount of time “Bibliographic Research” occurs in this content analysis. While 11 out of 30 programs does not seem high, it nearly twice as many occurrences as qualitative research (6), which has the next highest occurrence in the data set (see Fig. 7). Examples of “Bibliographic Research” include mention of course requirements or projects like a bibliographic essay, or even culminating projects for the MA degree. There are also a couple mentions of bibliographic research methods explicitly like a course called “Introduction to Critical and Research Methods” which “introduces students to research strategies, textual analysis, bibliographic study, critical approaches,

and literary theory” which is the research methods course offered to MA students in the Writing Studies track of the program. Therefore, there are programs that offer literature or literacy-based research methods to MA students in Writing Studies, which I will discuss later in this chapter.

<b>Program Classification (Number of Programs)</b>	<b>Qualitative Research</b>	<b>Quantitative Research</b>	<b>Mixed-Methods Research</b>	<b>Bibliographic Research</b>
Total R1 (9)	4	2	0	6
Total R2 (9)	1	0	0	3
Total R3 (3)	0	0	0	1
Total M1 (7)	0	0	0	1
Total M2 (2)	1	0	0	0
Total (30)	6	0	0	11

**Figure 3.6: Research Methods and Methodologies Subcategories**

### **Culminating Project**

In considering the culminating project, I included codes referring to what programs required MA students to complete at the end of the degree. Overall, 24 programs offer a thesis option, 5 programs offer a portfolio option, and 11 programs offer a test or comprehensive examination option. Many programs provide students with two options and allow students to select their desired culminating project, other programs require a specific kind of culminating project, and a couple programs require a combination of a portfolio and a test. Many programs did not have a specific definition or length requirement for a “thesis option” for their students. One program noted a thesis being an article-length paper; another program described a thesis as 40-60 pages; another 50-100 pages; but the majority of programs did not have a specific length that could be found online. A small number of programs required a defense of the thesis and a few programs provided rubrics for

the thesis and the defense, which would determine whether or not a student was successful in completing their culminating project.

For the portfolio option, the five programs that offered the portfolio required different materials. One program required students to include a “bibliographic essay that provides an introduction to any area of interest to scholars in rhetoric and composition” and a “substantive revision of one essay originally written for any graduate level rhetoric and composition class.” According to the guidelines, the portfolio for this program would be between 51-80 pages. Another program’s portfolio option includes artifacts from the student’s time in the program, including a statement about the student’s growth as a scholar, teacher, reader, and writer (I would be curious if this program would define researcher and scholar as the same thing). A different program required an annotated bibliography in the portfolio that would accompany a student’s culminating test or examination.

Finally, the culminating test or examination was more popular than I imagined. Some programs provided a recommended reading list, some programs provided a required reading list, and other programs instructed students to design and create a reading list. These culminating tests are modelled off comprehensive exams for PhD students, however, there is no mention of how the skills a student learns in a comprehensive exam will be transferable to a PhD program, or whether or not these exams will be useful for their next experience. The information about culminating projects can also demonstrate who a program is designing a website for, including current students. While some prospective students will want information about culminating projects, there were specific approval documents that are clearly for current MA students who are starting their culminating project.

<b>Program Classification (Number of Programs)</b>	<b>Final Thesis</b>	<b>Final Portfolio</b>	<b>Final Test</b>
Total R1 (9)	8	1	2
Total R2 (9)	7	2	3
Total R3 (3)	2	1	1
Total M1 (7)	6	0	4
Total M2 (2)	1	1	1
Total (30)	24	5	11

**Figure 3.7: Culminating Experience Subcategories**

### **Other**

Finally, in considering the “Other” category, I used it as a space to include information about research that did not fit into the other categories or subcategories. The data found in this section includes references to particular campus resources where students can go for research help, or specific research libraries which will help students complete bibliographic research. Three programs include explicit reference to their IRB procedures for research that involves human subjects. Some programs include previous student dissertations and theses; however, I was not able to differentiate between MA student theses, and this may have been because they are not included. A few programs include information about presenting at conferences, and one program’s English Graduate Organization even included discussions about different types of research presentations a student can give at a conference and included the CFP for the Qualitative Research Network at CCCC’s 2020 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

<b>Program Classification (Number of Programs)</b>	<b>Other</b>
Total R1 (9)	9
Total R2 (9)	6
Total R3 (3)	2
Total M1 (7)	4
Total M2 (2)	2
Total (30)	23

**Figure 3.8: Other Codes Identified**

### **Brief Discussion**

This content analysis provides some insight into how 30 MA programs in Writing Studies describe or include research on their online program descriptions. From a birds-eye view, the 30 programs have many similarities including exposing students to different types of research, which in turn, challenges students to consider how knowledge is created and understood. While this is a larger epistemological question that scholars in Writing Studies are constantly navigating and re-defining, this content analysis at least provides snapshots of what kinds of research methods and methodologies MA level programs are promoting in their online program descriptions, which in turn, can communicate program values to prospective and current students. Overall, this content analysis provides a starting place to begin to ask my research question: How are graduate MA programs in Writing Studies preparing MA students as researchers?

Combined, the 30 program descriptions include program and curricular goals that reference research, describe research methods courses that MA students are required to take (although, not every program has a required research methods course), and outlines the culminating project a student must complete for the degree. Each of these categories and data points address my original

research question, but not every program is the same. Therefore, when considering how each of these 30 MA programs are preparing students as researchers, the answer is: It depends. And this is why I believe it is important to consider the 30 programs together, which can then lead to larger conversations about the overall purpose of an MA degree and can begin to provide answers to how MA programs are preparing students as researchers.

To attempt to answer the original research question, it appears that programs offer the following opportunities: 1) Exposure to research in the field, usually through coursework; 2) Culminating projects which require some kind of mastery and incorporates original thought, whether this is a thesis, project, portfolio, exam, or a combination of these; and 3) Through exposure to faculty who have been trained as researchers. While this third category may not be a formal or structured component of an MA program, students are learning from professors who were trained as researchers in their graduate programs. Therefore, as students are taking coursework, they may also be developing relationships with professors who have experience with specific research methods and methodologies, and these relationships can develop into working together on a research project or may result in an MA student finding a committee member for their culminating project. While the content analysis did not provide explicit examples of this type of relationship-based research training, many program descriptions highlight their small student to faculty ratio, which hints at this type of relationship-opportunity to develop between students and current faculty.

Related to faculty experience, one criticism I have about the online program descriptions concerns the research methods course descriptions. While many programs offer a research methods course, it is apparent programs rely on faculty expertise to design these research methods courses. Therefore, if a particular faculty member has experience as an archivist, then there is a strong chance a research methods course will rely heavily on archival research methods. If a faculty member has experience with corpus analysis, then they may include methods and methodologies that align with



their own interests into a research methods course. Therefore, when considering course offerings, it may be beneficial to include who is teaching the course instead of just offering a generic course catalog description. Although, this may not be possible unless a program has direct control of their webpage and are able to express this to prospective students. Including this information could benefit prospective students and current students and would allow for programs to highlight the particular ways a program approaches preparing MA students as researchers.

Additionally, in considering the way programs communicate their goals, values, and outcomes to students, I did not see explicit reference to their curricular or programmatic goals, values, and outcomes outside of the main landing page of a website. Therefore, programs need to consider how these values are being connected across their webpages and what that communicates to a reader. A prospective student may be able to find how much a stipend for a program will be, which is extremely important, but not be able to identify what they will be able to do after their experience in a particular MA program.

I think the biggest takeaway from the content analysis is how varied the curricular offerings are for the 30 different programs represented here. While there are required research methods courses for the majority of the programs, these research methods courses may not be uniform. Therefore, when considering how MA programs are preparing students as researchers, there may not be enough information from program descriptions to understand how MA students in particular are being prepared as researchers. Instead, these program descriptions provide more questions than they answer. For example, when some programs mention employment or academic opportunities associated with the degree, questions of purpose and transferability come to mind. Therefore, faculty in a program may ask: How are course goals enacted in the curricular offerings of a program? And how do these specific goals 1) Help MA students, and 2) Reflect best practices in the discipline. While this may not specifically connect to how programs are preparing MA students as researchers,

a larger conversation about the purpose and value of an MA degree needs to take place concurrent to an analysis of MA student preparation. If scholars in the discipline are calling the PhD a research degree, then scholars need to stop and interrogate the purpose of an MA degree from a curricular and discipline specific viewpoint.

Finally, on a personal note, I am left with a question about the curricular practice of a culminating exam. I can understand how practicing for a comprehensive examination would be important for future PhD students; however, if a student is planning to teach in the K-16 system or enter administrative, academic, or non-academic employment opportunities, then what does a culminating exam help students accomplish. From a program perspective, it may be easier to review a culminating exam, especially if the program has mandated assessment criteria; however, from a student perspective, I do not see how this exercise is offering students a new skillset. While it may be difficult to manage an MA program with 30 students completing original research; as I have mentioned previously, I think the skills learned in an original research project can be beneficial for their next endeavor.

### **Limitations**

In considering the limitations of the content analysis, the scope of this study does not account for research methods and methodologies used by Technical Communication scholars. Technical Communication scholars may approach a website with a focus on accessibility, user experience and user design, graphic design studies, online indexing or even considering the amount of clicks it takes to access specific information on a website. There is a need for this type of research to be conducted on program websites, especially considering issues of accessibility and how website design can act as an intentional or unintentional gatekeeping method for prospective students. For example, for one of the programs in this study, I could not access the program description for the research methods course because it was hidden behind a log-in screen and required a user to have an

account with the institution. Therefore, in this case, information was hidden from a user because of where it was housed: The program descriptions were located in the course catalog, not on the MA program's webpage. Overall, I did not comment on the ease of use or evaluate how well a program website was designed for a user. These are real concerns, especially when a program is using their website as their main advertising tool for recruitment. If a prospective student cannot find information about the program or cannot access information because the website is not designed with a prospective student in mind; then the website acts as a barrier or gatekeeper, which most likely is not the point of the website.

## Chapter 4 - Survey of MA Programs

As outlined in the methods section of the first chapter, for the quantitative component of this convergent mixed-methods research inquiry, I distributed an online survey about Writing Studies MA programs focusing on the concept of research. While the content analysis addressed how online program descriptions cast light on how MA students will be prepared as researchers during their time in a program, the purpose of the survey was to hear from faculty in Writing Studies MA programs about how their programs prepare MA students as researchers.

Before designing the survey, I reviewed the CCCCs position papers about the nature of research in Writing Studies and returned to the various research methods texts mentioned in the first chapter to identify various types of qualitative, quantitative, bibliographic, and mixed-methods research methods and methodologies to include in the survey. I then returned to my original research question and sub-questions, and created a survey that I believe would best answer the following questions:

- 1) How are programs preparing MA students to be researchers,
- 2) What types of research are MA students conducting in their programs, and
- 3) Do the program goals align to the discipline's goals in relationship to research?

In this chapter I will address the first and second question, but the discussion chapter will address the third question by combining data from the content analysis and the survey.

I designed the survey instrument with the online Qualtrics survey program. My home institution provides access to Qualtrics for all faculty, staff, and students. The survey instrument included multiple choice, select all that apply, and text-entry questions. The survey was designed to take no more than fifteen minutes to complete. After designing the instrument, I conducted user/pilot-testing with Dr. Nicole Caswell, one of the co-directors of the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists (MDCWSS), Dr. Rory Lee, one of my committee

members who used a survey for his dissertation research, and Dr. Jackie Grutsch McKinney, my thesis advisor. Following the pilot testing, I made a few minor changes to the instrument and applied for IRB approval to send the survey instrument to MA programs.

To identify the population, I used the MDCWSS list of MA programs and then through information found online in Writing Studies MA program descriptions, I tried to identify the current Graduate Program Director in Writing Studies or a faculty member who had taught the research methods course for Writing Studies within the last three academic years. Overall, I identified 125 people and sent them an email asking them to participate in the survey with the approved IRB number and a letter of intent (see Appendix C for the email text). In the email, I explicitly asked participants to send this survey to someone else in their department if they believed they were not the best fit for the survey. I heard back from several people who identified a person in the department who would better fit the survey criteria and also received a surprising email from a program director who explained they currently do not have any MA students in their Writing Studies program because they are doing a curricular revision, although their website still has application information and a deadline for the MA in Rhetoric and Composition. Using Stephen Grover's dissertation as an example, I had the survey available for six weeks. I sent the survey instrument to every participant the day the survey instrument was published in Qualtrics and sent a follow-up email 4 weeks after the survey was opened to "encourage a higher response rate (Couper 2008)" (as cited in Grover 60). Overall, 41 participants started the survey and 40 participants submitted completed surveys, which gave me a response rate of 33% (in comparison to survey projects mentioned in this study, Brown, Torres, Enos, and Jeurgensmeyer's response rate for their project was 26%; Dunn and Mueller's response rate was 46%; and Grover's response rate was 32%). One participant's answers were collected when the survey closed but had not hit submit (the final

participant completed about two-thirds of the survey but did not complete the questions about culminating research projects).

Overall the survey was structured in this order (see Appendix D for the full survey instrument):

- 1) Informed consent letter and IRB number with a question about consent
- 2) Program Demographics:
  - a) Carnegie Classification
  - b) Participant role
  - c) MA student and faculty numbers
  - d) Program goals about research
- 3) Research Methods Course(s):
  - a) Requirements and expectations
  - b) Methodologies and methods taught in the course
  - c) Types of methodologies taught associated with
    - i) Qualitative
    - ii) Quantitative
    - iii) Bibliographic
    - iv) Mixed-Methods
  - d) Types of research methods, concepts, and tools taught in the course
- 4) Secondary Research and Non-Research Methods Courses
  - a) Student requirements and learning opportunities
  - b) Student expectations to conduct secondary research
- 5) Primary Research and Non-Research Methods Courses
  - a) Student requirements and expectations

- b) Students learning to conduct primary research outside of a research methods course
- 6) Research Mentoring and Research Assistantships
- 7) MA Student Research and Culminating Projects
  - a) Types of required culminating projects
  - b) Types of methodologies and methods associated with culminating projects including
    - i) Qualitative
    - ii) Quantitative
    - iii) Bibliographic
    - iv) Mixed-Methods
  - c) Average time provided to complete task
  - d) Average time needed to complete task

The only forced response question was the first question asking consent to take the survey; therefore, participants were not required to answer every question, and some questions involved skip-logic based on the answers a participant selected. For example, if a participant identified qualitative research methods being the only methodology taught in a research methods course, they would not be shown the quantitative, bibliographic, or mixed-methods options when asked to identify which types of research methodologies and methods were taught in the research methods course.

After the survey was closed, I analyzed the data collected from the surveys. For this analysis I relied on Richard Haswell's advice in their article, "Quantitative Methods in Composition Studies: An Introduction to Their Functionality," to identify "insights" and "transgression" about the current field of Writing Studies (188). Additionally, I used Creswell and Plano Clark's overview of analyzing

and interpreting data in mixed method research (238-243). This included an initial analysis of the survey data on its own, including descriptive statistical analysis, since the project did not allow for probabilistic statistical analysis due to sample size and response rate. The open response data was not coded but will be used in this chapter to describe some of the statistical findings. In conducting my data analysis, I first cross-tabbed the results by Carnegie Classification to reflect the organization of the content analysis chapter; however, since I am not able to verify each participant's Carnegie Classification, I decided to look at the combined data for each question.<sup>6</sup> Since the survey is not specifically identifying how R1 or M2 institutions are preparing Writing Studies MA students as researchers, an overall picture of the responses can still provide insights into student experiences from a program or faculty perspective.

Finally, there are two major limitations of this survey: 1) Since I did not want to track user data through Qualtrics, I selected "Anonymize Responses" which meant I did not have any way of knowing whether or not more than one person from a program completed the survey. When analyzing the data, I could not identify similar responses which could represent the same program; however, it is possible that two people from the same program could have taken the survey and provided slightly different answers. 2) The survey data is self-reported; therefore, I cannot verify the accuracy of the information provided in the survey. This is a limitation of any survey data; therefore, the results and conclusions are representative of participant knowledge and participant perspectives.

## **Results**

Overall, 41 surveys were collected. Therefore, out of the 125 potential programs, 41 responded, so approximately a 33% response rate. While I had hoped more programs would respond, I still think the data from the survey can help identify current practices in MA programs at

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<sup>6</sup> Note: At the beginning of the "Results" section in this chapter, it will become apparent why I was not able to use the Carnegie Classification as a means of differentiating program types.



least for these (assumed) 41 programs. In structuring the results, I am using the same outline of the survey and will present the findings using descriptive statistical analysis and will make minor comments about the data. I will end this chapter with a brief discussion, which will then lead into the overall discussion chapter.

Looking at all of the data represented in the survey, a typical MA student in Writing Studies in one of these programs would be enrolled in a R1 “R1: Doctoral Universities--Very high research” program with 3-4 faculty members with somewhere between 1-7 students. The student would be required to take a research methods course which would include information about qualitative and mixed-methods research methodologies and would most likely learn about general qualitative research methods, ethnographic research methods, and would learn the research skills of interviewing and coding. In the program, the student would write a seminar paper, a literature review, and an annotated bibliography. The student would possibly have an opportunity (50% chance) to serve as a research assistant or participate in other research-oriented positions, but this would not be required of the student. Finally, this student would be required to complete a culminating project of original research, most likely either a master’s thesis (75-100 pages) or a master’s project (30-50 pages), in two academic terms but would not be required to conduct primary research during their time in the program.

### **Program Demographics**

Out of the 41 participants, the majority of the responses indicated they were from the Carnegie Classification “R1: Doctoral Universities--Very high research” (see Fig. 4.1 for the entire list of programs). A surprising data point is the number of self-identified “M3: Master’s Colleges and Universities--Small Size” programs. According to the Carnegie Classification website, there is only one program that would technically be identified as a M3 in the list of programs that offer an MA in Writing Studies; however, 5 programs self-identified as such. Therefore, this may offer insight into

how programs self-identify and could be explained by programs not relying on Carnegie

Classifications.

R1	R2	R3 or D/PU	M1	M2	M3
11	9	4	5	3	5

**Figure 4.1: Number of Programs Self-Identified in the Survey (n=36)**

In terms of who took the survey (n=37) 10 participants identified as the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Graduate Program Director; 7 participants as the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Research Methods Professor or Instructor; 7 as Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Faculty; 6 as the General English Graduate Program Director; and 7 as “other” and wrote-in, “Department Chair; Chair of dept; Director of Writing Programs and grad faculty in Rhetoric and Writing; department chair; WS/RC Asst Grad Dir, MA Advisor; Adviser [sic] to MA students in writing studies/rhetoric, taught methods course recently; I teach the course in bullet 2 [research methods course] and am the DGS for the dept.” The inclusion of so many “other” may reflect program specific language like “MA Advisor” but also can reflect an omission on my part of including “Department Chair” since I was not sure if a department chair would have direct knowledge of MA students in a department. I am unsure if the department chair in my program would be able to identify how students in the Writing Studies MA are prepared as researchers; therefore, my own perspective impacted the options I provided participants.

In identifying the number of students in their Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition program (n=37), the majority of responses (12) indicated a student population ranging from 5-7 MA students, with 11 programs having 1-4 MA students; 6 programs having 8-10 MA students; 1 program having 11-15 MA students; 1 program having 15-19 students; and 6 programs having 20+ MA students (n=37). Then in identifying the number of faculty in their Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition program, the majority of the programs (17) have 3-4 faculty members, with 5

programs having 1-2 faculty members, 10 programs having 5-7 faculty members, 2 programs having 8-10 faculty members, 1 program having 11-14 faculty members, and 2 programs having 15+ faculty members. Therefore, the programs represented in the survey (as indicated in the Carnegie Classification question as well) range from small programs with a couple of faculty members with anywhere from 1-10 graduate students and large programs with 15+ faculty with 20+ MA students (see Fig. 4.2 for an overview of program sizes of faculty and students). According to the data, an overall average for the types of MA programs represented in this survey would be an MA program with 3-4 faculty members with somewhere between 1-7 students. When the data is arranged by self-reported Carnegie Classification, the answers are a bit surprising (see Fig. 4.3). Three programs that do not offer a Ph.D. (M1, M2, or M3) have 20+ MA students, and 7 institutions (4 R1's and 3 R2's) only have 1-4 MA students in their programs. Therefore, programs that may have Ph.D. students may have fewer MA students which could be a result of funding opportunities for graduate students.

		Number of Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Faculty					
		1-2	3-4	5-7	8-10	11-14	15+
Number of Writing Studies MA Students	1-4	3	6	2	0	0	0
	5-7	0	8	4	0	0	0
	8-10	2	2	1	0	0	0
	11-15	0	0	0	1	0	0
	15-19	0	1	0	0	0	0
	20+	0	0	3	0	1	2

Figure 4.2: Number of Faculty and MA Students in Programs (n=37)

Number of Writing Studies MA Students		Self-Reported Carnegie Classification (37 total)					
		R1	R2	R3	M1	M2	M3
	1-4	4	3	0	2	1	1
	5-7	4	2	3	0	1	2
	8-10	2	1	1	2	0	0
	11-15	1	0	0	0	0	0
	15-19	0	0	0	0	1	0
	20+	0	3	0	1	0	2

**Figure 4.3: Self-Reported Carnegie Classifications Cross-Tabulated with Number of MA Students (n=37)**

Finally, I asked if their program had specific goals which “include research skills or experience(s) for MA Students” (n=36) and 30 participants answered “Yes,” 2 answered “No” and 4 answered “I don’t know.” Out of the 30 participants that answered yes, 29 participants included a written response which asked them to include the program goal(s). These answers ranged from, “Not a specific stated goal, but we expect students to learn about field-specific research” to “Conduct sustained research and convey the results of that research in writing and digital media in such a way as to make an initial contribution to the ongoing conversation among scholars in rhetoric and composition.” One response indicated a process-based understanding of research and identified specific steps an MA student will take to conduct research, both before, during, and after the research project/process:

You will demonstrate an understanding of research methodologies by carrying out course-related and client-related projects directed at

conceptualizing, understanding, and reformulating current theories in the larger field of rhetoric and writing studies. Articulate a theoretical framework for the project (including a literature review to assess the theoretical and methodological contributions previously made to this area). Identify and define appropriate methods of data collection and apply appropriate research methods. Evaluate the effectiveness of the project and its implications to the field of rhetoric, writing, and digital media through peer and self-evaluation. Apply appropriate writing and design standards and literacy skills to succeed in academic, civic, and personal life. Actively participate in local, national, and global communities of academic and workplace writers by participating in professional development activities, and by creating and updating online profiles. Effectively represent your experience, skills and competencies through written (resume, cover letter, social media, application materials) and verbal (interview skills, presentation skills, etc.) communication. Develop your project management skills.

The results from this question indicate programs articulate their goals in very idiosyncratic ways and do not necessarily match other program goals, outcomes, and expectations. Finally, these goals may not be public goals or may not be identified as program goals but may represent a felt or sensed perspective from a participant (therefore it is an emic view of the question, rather than an etic view; see Stake 15 or 218). The question, and this study in general, does not ask whether or not MA students would be able to articulate this goal, but provides an opportunity for faculty to express their understanding of a program goal or outcome if the program does not have explicit goals or outcomes.

### **Research Methods Course(s)**

Out of 37 participants, 21 participants indicated their program offers at least one required research methods course, 11 participants noted they offer a research methods course that is not required, and 5 programs do not offer a research methods course for MA students in Writing Studies. Out of the 32 programs that offer the course, 13 programs offer the course in a student's first year, 5 programs offer the course in a student's second year; 7 programs offer the course every-other years so students will take it at different times in their program; 4 programs offer the course

inconsistently so students may not take the course, and 3 programs selected other but did not include textual answers to define other.

In exploring the types of methodologies taught in the research methods course (n=32), 30 programs include qualitative research, 17 programs include quantitative research, 28 programs include mixed-methods research, 19 programs include bibliographic/library research, and 5 programs include other research such as, “some Analytics [capitalization in original]; corpus linguistics; (we do an archival research unit); a separate course addresses bibliographic methods; [and] rhetoric.”

Participants then indicated what kinds of methods within each type of research methodology (qualitative, quantitative, mixed-methods, bibliographic/library, and other) are offered in the research methods course.

In terms of the 30 participants that included qualitative research methods being taught in the research methods course, the most popular methods (with numbers representing overall count) were Qualitative Research (General) (28), Ethnography Research Methods (27), Case-Study Research Methods (24), Discourse Analysis (21) Rhetorical Analysis (20), and Textual Analysis (19) (see Fig. 4.4 for most common qualitative research methods taught; see Appendix E for a complete list of research methods taught organized by methodologies). For this question there were three text-entry responses: “A separate course focuses on rhetorical analysis; depends on the instructor and student interest; I’m answering based on how I taught the course. Not sure how others might teach it, plus it hasn’t been taught in some time (mine was a special topics).” Therefore, while qualitative research in general is taught in 28 out of the 30 research methods courses offered in these programs, the methods associated with qualitative research differ based on the program, or as the text-entry replies indicate, can change based on who is teaching the course or may rely on student interest.

Qualitative Research Method	Count
Qualitative Research (General)	28
Ethnography Research Methods	27
Case-Study Research Methods	24
Discourse Analysis	21
Rhetorical Analysis	20
Textual Analysis	19
Archival Research (physical)	17
Archival Research (digital)	15
Narrative Research Methods	14
Grounded Theory Research Methods	13
Observation	13
Autoethnography Research Methods	12
Content Analysis	12
Genre Analysis	12
Teacher Research	11

**Figure 4.4: Most Common Qualitative Research Methods Taught in Research Methods Courses**

Out of the 17 participants that indicated quantitative research methods, 15 include quantitative research (general), 11 programs include quantitative survey design, 9 programs include corpus analysis methods, 6 include experimental design (positivist design), 4 include linguistic analysis methods, and one program offered a text entry of “correlational methods.”

Out of the 28 participants that indicated mixed-methods research, 23 include mixed-methods (general), 7 teach mixed-methods case study design, 6 include mixed-methods participatory-social justice design, 4 teach convergent mixed-methods design, 4 teach exploratory

sequential mixed-methods design, 3 teach mixed-methods experimental (for intervention) design, and 2 teach explanatory sequential mixed methods design.

Out of the 19 participants that indicated bibliographic/library research, 16 teach literature reviews, 15 teach database research (digital), 15 teach library research (digital), 14 teach library research (physical), 14 teach annotated bibliography, 11 teach synthesis, 8 teach database research (physical), and 5 teach theory building.

Finally, I asked the participants to identify methods or concepts explicitly taught in a research methods course out of a list of 30 options (see Appendix E for the complete list of methodologies, methods, and concepts taught in research methods courses), but the most popular was Interviewing (28) (see Fig. 4.5 for the most popular methods or concepts). Finally, one of the text entries for “Other” was “Research Ethics.”



Research Method or Concept	Count
Interviewing (General)	28
Coding (General)	22
Text Analysis	22
Observation (General)	21
Triangulation	17
Research Journals or Researcher Memos	16
Survey Design	16
Archival Research (print)	16
Reliability	15
Validity	15
Field Notes	15
Limitations to Research	14
Sampling (General)	14
Interviewing: One on one	14
Archival Research (digital)	13
Linguistic Analysis	12
Observation (Public Setting)	10
Corpus Analysis	10

**Figure 4.5: Most Common Research Methods and Concepts Taught in Research Methods Courses**

### **Primary and Secondary Research in Non-Research Methods Courses**

Participants were asked if MA students were required to conduct secondary and primary research in their time in the program. In terms of secondary research (n=36), 28 participants answered “Yes;” 5 answered “Maybe, it is not required but it is recommended;” and 3 answered “No.” While it may be surprising that eight programs do not require students to conduct secondary

research, this could be due to the word “required” or could reflect a more professional/practical degree (like professional writing) instead of a more focused academic degree program. If a program expects students to conduct research but does not explicitly require secondary research either in course descriptions or program goals, then participants may have selected “Maybe” or “No” even if students conduct secondary research in their time in the program. Nineteen participants noted students were explicitly taught how to do secondary research, and 17 participants selected “Only if individual instructors teach this.” When asked what kinds of secondary research students conduct, 31 participants selected “Seminar papers;” 27 selected “Literature Review;” 25 selected “Annotated Bibliography;” and 13 selected “Book Reviews.”

In terms of primary research, 7 participants indicated students are required to complete primary research, 17 do not require it but recommend it, and 12 do not require MA students to conduct primary research. When asked if students are taught how to conduct primary research outside of a research methods course, 21 participants indicated “Only if individual instructors choose to teach this;” 12 indicated “Yes;” and 2 included a text entry: “If students take the (recommended but not required) research methods course; [and] Students who write a thesis would have this kind of explicit instruction leading up to writing their thesis. The program is set up to steer students towards an internship, however, rather than writing a thesis, so the experience of explicit instruction of research methods outside of our research methods course is atypical.”

### **Research Mentoring and Research Assistantships**

When identifying other ways students can learn how to do research in an MA program (n=36), 16 participants indicated MA students have the opportunity to serve as research assistants but noted it is not a requirement of the program. Two only allow Ph.D. students to serve as research assistants, and 13 do not offer this opportunity. Finally, there were five text entries for this question: “rarely; Some of the Writing Center GAs participate in programmatic self-studies, and ENG 101

GAs sometimes participate as scorers in program assessment projects; Generally these opportunities go to PhD students, but MA students sometimes can work w/faculty [sic]; Allowed as per budget; [and] No, but they can do this for the Graduate Writing Center if they have TA positions housed there.” Therefore, it does seem like a research assistantship can be a way for an MA student to learn about research, but varies widely based on the program, funding opportunities, and where (and if) an MA student has a teaching assistantship or graduate assistantship.

Then participants were then asked, “What other opportunities exist for MA students in your programs to learn about research besides being a Research Assistant or taking a research methods course?” which resulted in 21 text entry responses. This ranged from two responses of “none” to learning from their advisor or collaborating with faculty (10 responses); or research methods being embedded into other graduate courses or being exposed to other people doing research but not participating in the research (7 responses); and 4 responses mentioning students choosing to complete an MA thesis for their culminating project.

### **MA Student Research and Culminating Projects**

As mentioned in the content analysis chapter, Writing Studies MA programs offer different culminating projects a student must complete in their time in the program. When participants were asked, “Are MA students required to complete a culminating project of original research for your MA program” 19 out of 35 participants selected “Yes;” 8 selected “Maybe;” and 8 selected “No.” Then participants were asked to select which types of culminating projects MA students can complete in their program: Master’s Thesis (75-100 pages) (18); Master’s Project (30-50 pages) (17); Research Prospectus (5); Creative Project (7); Collection of Scholarly Articles (3); Test (modeled off comprehensive exams) (4); and 9 text entries which include: “Portfolio of their work; Can opt for a revised course paper and oral exam on reading lists; Masters Project (about 25-35 pages); Our required theses are a minimum of 50 pages. Projects fall under a different category and are not

available in our MA; exit portfolio that combines multiple genres; comprehensive exams (essays); portfolio; teaching portfolio; [and] Book review for a scholarly journal, [sic] online professional website.”

Then participants were asked, “To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research theses, projects, or prospectus have students completed at your institution?” Participants were allowed to select more than one option, and the 36 participants indicated the following: Qualitative Research (19); Quantitative Research (8); Mixed Methods Research (15); Bibliographic/Library Research (16); I do not know (3); and 1 text-entry: “Autoethnographic.”

In identifying types of culminating qualitative research projects, the most popular were: Rhetorical Analysis (15); Case Study (14); Teacher Research (10); Ethnography Research (10); Narrative Research (9); Discourse Analysis (9); Textual Analysis (9); and Archival Research (physical) (8). When asked to give their opinion on the most popular qualitative research conducted for culminating MA research projects, seven participants mentioned case-study while teacher research and rhetorical analysis each received two mentions.

In identifying types of culminating quantitative research projects, the most popular were: Qualitative Survey Design (8); Corpus Analysis (4); Linguistic Analysis (2); and Experimental Design (Positivist Design) (1). When asked to give their opinion on the most popular quantitative research conducted for culminating MA research projects, all six participants mentioned survey design.

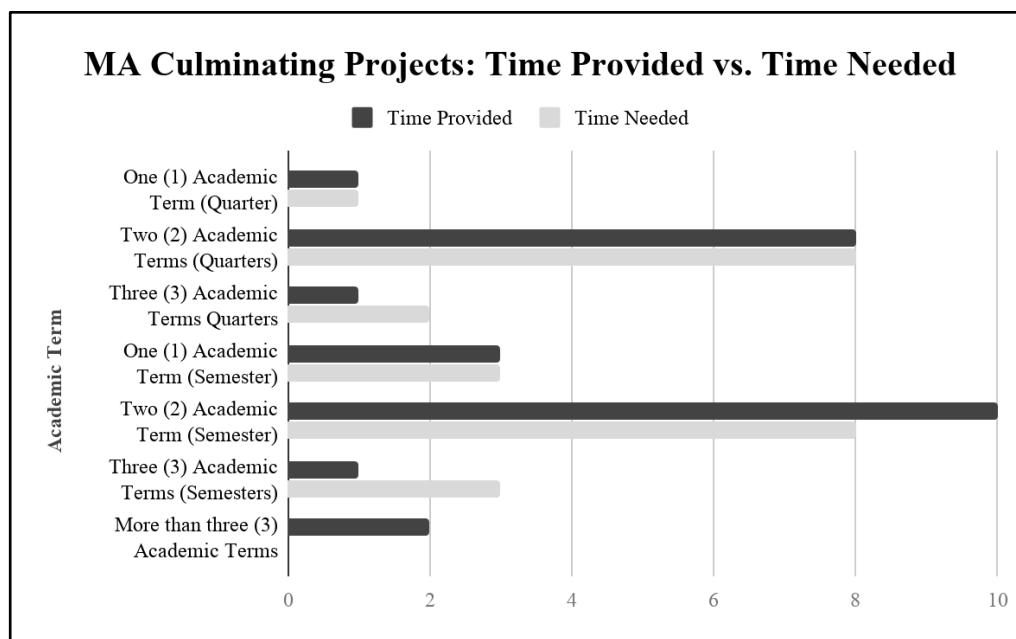
In identifying types of culminating mixed methods research projects, the most popular were: Mixed Methods Case Study Design (8); Convergent Mixed Methods Design (5); Exploratory Sequential (2); Mixed Methods Participatory Design (2); and Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (1); Mixed Methods Experimental (or Intervention) Design (1); [and] other (1): “projects don’t fall into any of these categories.” When asked to give their opinion on the most popular mixed

methods research conducted for culminating MA research projects, participants noted, “Surveys plus coded interviews (structured or semi-structured); Using case studies to clarify survey data analysis; mixed-methods (interviews & surveys); [and two mentions of] Mixed Method Case Study.”

In identifying types of culminating bibliographic/library research projects, 11 participants selected Seminar Paper; 6 selected Literature Review; 4 selected Annotated Bibliography; and 2 selected Book Review. When asked to give their opinion on the most popular bibliographic/library research projects, two participants mentioned expanding a seminar paper; three mentioned literature reviews being a part of a thesis but not being the entire thesis; and two participants mentioned either a rhetorical analysis or a textual analysis.

Finally, I asked participants to answer on average, how long a program gives an MA student to complete their culminating project, and then asked on average how long it takes MA students to complete their culminating project. In terms of how long a program provides MA students to complete their culminating project, 10 participants answered “Two (2) academic terms (semesters);” 8 participants answered “Two (2) academic terms (quarters);” 3 participants answered “One (1) academic term (semester); and the following each received one answer: “One (1) academic term (quarter), Three (3) academic terms (quarters); More than three (3) academic terms (semesters).” Finally, two participants mentioned credit in the text-entry: “6 credits worth. Either in one or two semesters. Technically they can take up to 5 years on it. [And] Depends on if they take the thesis option (2 terms) or the capstone project option (1 term).” In contrast, when asked how long it actually takes students to complete the culminating project, the answers did not match the numbers from the previous question (see Fig. 4.6 for a comparison of the two data sets). Eight participants selected “Two (2) academic terms (quarters);” eight participants selected “Two (2) academic terms (semesters);” three participants selected “One (1) academic term (semester);” three participants selected “Three (3) academic terms (semesters);” two participants selected “Three (3) academic

terms (quarters);” one participant selected “One (1) academic term (quarter);” and one participant included a text entry: “I’m not sure of the thesis option; otherwise, 1 term (plus the time spent identifying faculty to work with, etc.).” Therefore, for MA students in their programs, two participants noted it takes a student one semester longer (3 semesters) than they are allotted (2 semesters) and one additional participant mentioned it takes students an average of 3 academic quarters to complete their culminating project. While I did not ask participants about the success/failure rate of MA students in their programs, I would be curious to know if students are aware of how long it takes to complete a culminating project and if there is a higher rate of not completing a culminating project at the schools where respondents mentioned a longer-average time to project completion.



**Figure 4.6: MA Culminating Research Projects Time Provided vs. Time Needed**

### Brief Discussion

The data collected in the survey represents how 41 participants indicate their Writing Studies MA program prepares students as researchers, but also can provide an understanding of how

programs differ. For example, not every MA program requires a research methods course, and even programs that offer a research methods course may not offer that course in a two-year span so a student may not have an opportunity to take a research methods course. When asked about other options of learning how to do research (besides a research assistantship or a research methods course), one participant wrote, “In actuality, we don't (yet) have a formal research methods course. I've taught it for the last three years as an independent study because I didn't see how our MAs could do their thesis research without at least an introductory methods course. We are just now getting the course on the books as an official offering. Outside of that and opportunities to learn methods during a class, we do not currently have other ways for MAs to learn about research.” Therefore, for this participant, the program does not have structured ways for students to learn how to conduct research but are still expected to complete an MA level thesis. While I do not have data on all 125 programs invited to participate in this study, if this is common in other programs, then steps need to be taken to ensure MA students have the scaffolded support they need to complete a culminating project that could require students to complete original research. Additionally, in describing opportunities for students to learn about research, one participant commented on students reading a lot, and another participant wrote about students attending professional development workshops where faculty and other students discuss their research. Therefore, for these two programs, students are learning by exposure to research, but without other types of explicit support, reading or hearing about a mixed methods case study does not necessarily mean a student will be able to conduct a mixed methods case study.

In terms of research methodologies, methods, and concepts taught in research methods courses, qualitative methodologies are the most popular according to the count (30 programs); however, quantitative (17 programs) and mixed methods (28 programs) methodologies do appear. One surprise is the mention of bibliographic/library research (19 programs) in the research methods

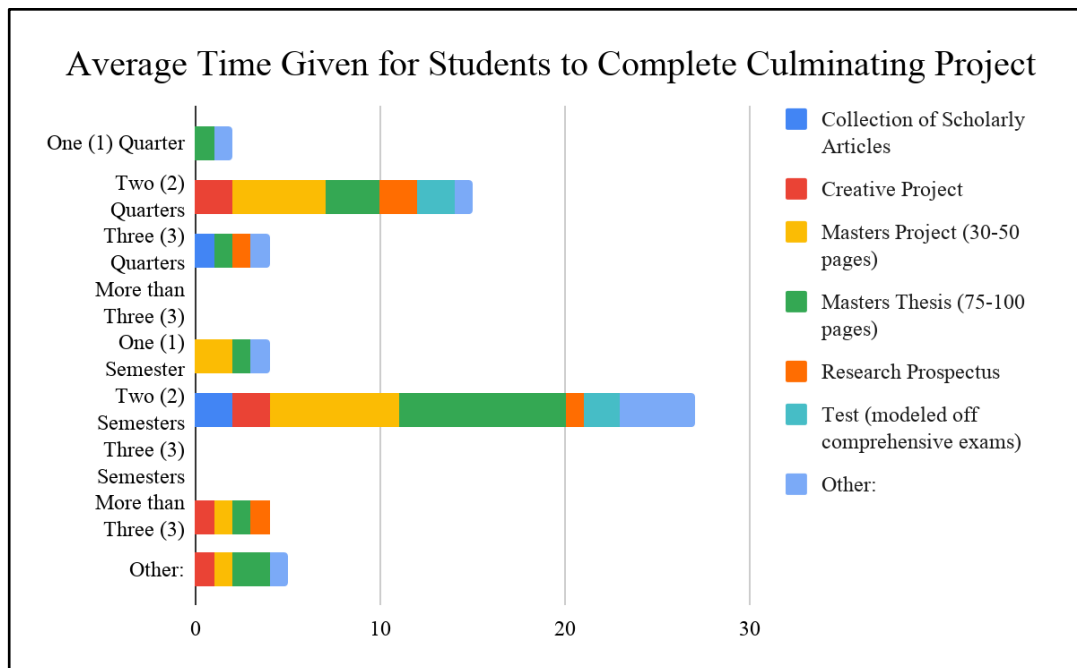
course. While this could be attributed to discussing tenets like digital and physical library research, or literature reviews within a research prospectus or an article of thesis, books like Vicki Byard's 2009 *Bibliographic Research in Composition Studies* may demonstrate the necessity of including this type of research when discussing and theorizing research in Writing Studies, both in considering the question "What is research?" and "How are programs preparing students (both MA and Ph.D.) as researchers?" Finally, I was not expecting Ethnography to be the most popular qualitative method to be taught in research methods courses outside of general qualitative research methods, and I am curious about how various programs are teaching ethnography to students, especially with new or upcoming collections around autoethnography and institutional ethnography. As Writing Studies continues to borrow methods from other disciplines, I think it would be interesting to see *how* programs are teaching these methodologies--whether that be through exposure or experience (which I will discuss more in the discussion chapter).

In terms of research concepts or skills taught, I was surprised by the gap between "Interviewing (General)" (28) and "Coding (General)" (22) because this could signify the difference between conducting research and analyzing/writing-up research. I would be curious to hear how the six participants that indicated including interviewing in their research methods course but do not teach coding help students understand how to analyze the interviews. However, when combined, there are 24 responses for "Open Coding, Values Coding, Holistic Coding, and Grounded Theory Coding (open, axial, and selective)." Therefore, a participant may have selected one of these codes without selecting "Coding (General)" which could account for the discrepancy between interviewing and coding. Additionally, I recognized when analyzing the data that I did not include "Research Ethics" or IRB submission protocols in the list of options, which one participant included in the text entry. Therefore, I would be interested to know if other programs discuss research ethics either through IRB or outside of IRB, and am curious about its absence in the text entries from the other

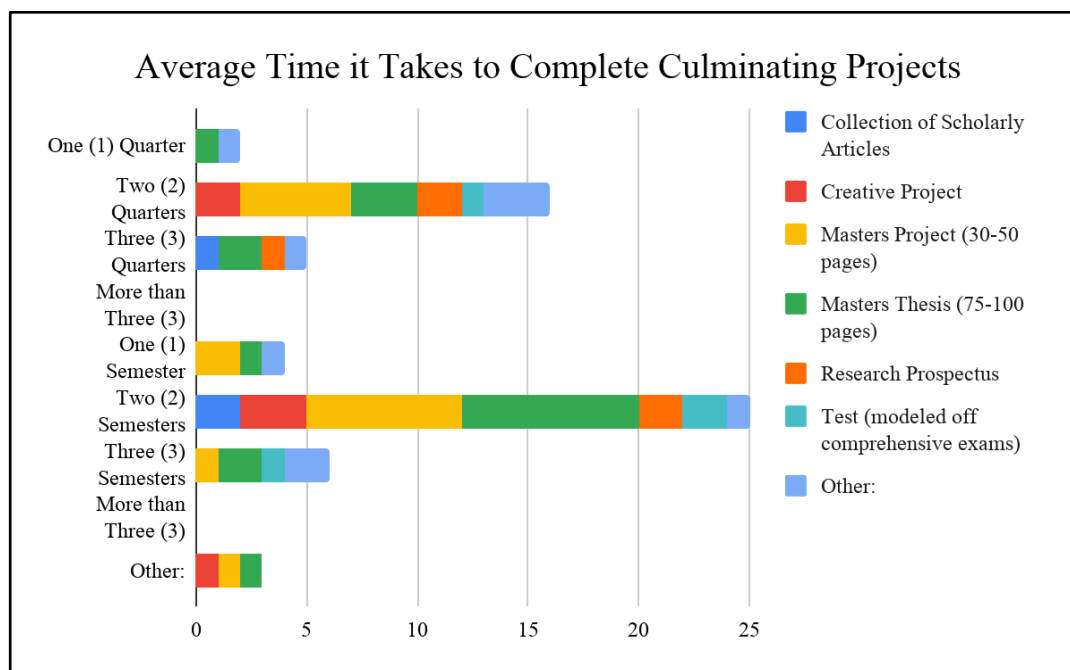


participants (although this could be due to the long list of options, which could detract from a participant being able to consider other concepts taught in a research methods course).

Finally, I think the last two questions about how long a program gives a student to complete a culminating project compared to how long it actually takes is an important data point. For an overview, see Figs. 4.7 and 4.8 below.



**Figure 4.7: Average Time Given for Students to Complete Culminating Project**



**Figure 4.8: Average Time it Takes to Complete Culminating Projects**

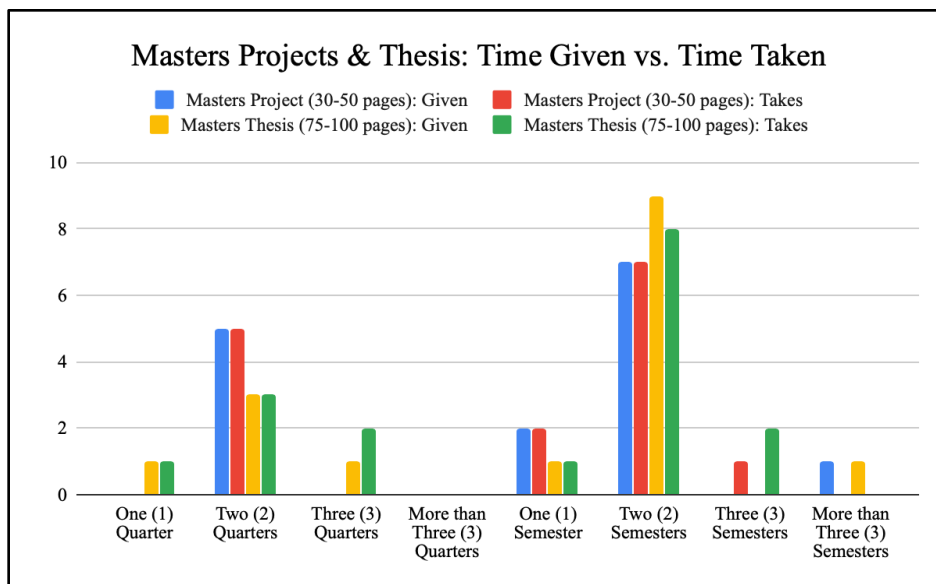
According to the data, it takes students longer to complete master's projects and theses (see Fig. 4.9 for a comparison). While one program only gives one academic quarter for a master's thesis, the majority of master's theses are given two quarters or two semesters to complete, but even though the options provided a page count, different programs may have different a different definition for a master's thesis completed in their program. Finally, I think it is interesting that one program gives students more than three semesters for either a master's project or a master's thesis. This would mean that in a standard MA program of two years, a student would start their master's project or thesis in their second semester. This program has a required research methods course students take in their first year, therefore, while it is not explicit in the response, taking the research methods course could be considered a part of working on a project or a thesis (and the participant reported it takes students on average 2 semesters to complete their project or thesis).

Overall, I think programs need to consider two points of data when looking at their MA student culminating projects: 1) If a student is required to complete a master's project or a master's

thesis, a program needs to be intentional about when a research methods course is offered (if it even is offered). If a research methods course is not offered but students can complete a master's project or thesis, like 3 programs in this survey indicated,<sup>7</sup> then changes need to be made to ensure students have enough scaffolded support to conduct their research. 2) Programs need to consider scaffolded steps to help students complete their research, especially if there is a large difference between time given vs. time it takes to complete a project. While a student may need additional time due to personal circumstances, this data should be made available to students when they are considering what kind of culminating project they are going to complete (assuming they have a choice). However, if a student is not given a choice and is required to conduct a specific kind of culminating project, then they need to be aware early in their MA program of how much time is given and how much time it usually takes students. Surprising students, or even worse, faultily assuming that students know this information, can be harmful to a student's experience and learning in a program and can also frustrate faculty and administrators.

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<sup>7</sup> 13 programs indicated a student could complete a thesis or a project and offer a research methods course that is not required.



**Figure 4.9: Difference in Time Given and Time Taken for Master's Projects and Master's Theses**

## Chapter 5 - Discussion Chapter

Before starting my master's program, I spent a lot of time reading and researching MA programs through program websites. I would read about the department and the program, trying to figure out if it would be a strong fit for my interests in digital writing technologies and research methods and methodologies. Some programs offered faculty research interests while others described the low student to faculty ratio; some programs emphasized teaching and service and others emphasized their mission to develop critical thinkers. I wanted to find a program that had at least one faculty member whose research interests were research methods and methodologies and another faculty member who was interested in technology's impact on writing, but I didn't reach out to faculty members in the program before applying. I wrote my application materials, wrangled together faculty members to write letters of recommendation, and hoped for the best. I didn't know I should try and talk to faculty about the program and their research, nor did I know (or even consider) information on a website could be outdated, especially since the application deadlines were current. I believed the websites would be up to date and would give me enough context to make an informed decision. While I am thankful this haphazard approach to applying to MA programs worked out for me, I think it could reflect the reality for a lot of students applying to Writing Studies programs. I knew I was getting my MA to then hopefully pursue a PhD, therefore, I had specific information I was looking for when researching MA programs. But when I started looking at PhD programs, I changed my approach.

While I was working on the content analysis and survey portions of this thesis, I was also applying to PhD programs in Writing Studies. Because of my experiences working on my thesis, I found myself analyzing department websites with a different perspective than when I was originally exploring MA programs. While most PhD programs offer a bit more context than MA program websites (for example, most programs include dissertation titles, alumni placement information,

degree timelines, department support, and some even include hyperlinks to alumni publications), there were similar issues that I noticed when doing the content analysis for this thesis. I found myself asking:

- How would I be prepared as a scholar, researcher, and teacher in this degree program?
- What information *isn't* included on their websites? Like completion percentages, time to completion averages, and other matriculation questions.
- What types of research are faculty currently doing?
- Were grad students predominantly using the same methods and methodologies in their dissertations? If so, why? If not, why not?

These questions were a natural result of working on my thesis, but I also recognized looking online would only give me a snapshot of a program and could not fully answer all of my questions.

Therefore, I reached out to current faculty and doctoral students and asked them questions about the program, including questions about training and development as a researcher, teacher, and administrator; alongside practical questions like what is the cost of living in the area, are teaching loads consistent, and what kind of faculty/student climate or “vibe” is present in the department? I asked these questions because the information was not available on program websites. Some questions, like the “vibe” question could not be answered in a tidy paragraph on a program website and would differ based on who was responding to the questions, but when a department mission statement includes sentiments like developing researchers and teachers, I wanted to know how this was happening and how students were collaborating with each other and faculty. Overall, I wanted to know how these programs were conceptualizing the PhD: What was the point/purpose of getting a PhD at this program, and how could faculty and students communicate this to a prospective student?

As I was asking these questions to faculty and students in PhD programs, I was also fielding questions about my own interests in pursuing a PhD. I tried to explain why I was interested in pursuing a PhD, and I always started with my experiences teaching high school English and being introduced to the research methods in composition course I took for my graduate certificate. For me, this was the catalyst; a watershed moment where I was exposed to a new worldview: I could interrogate my own practices through a methodical research project to ask, “What is currently happening, and why?” To my listener, I would then describe why I wanted to continue this work and why I think a PhD could help me continue this work, all while continuing to teach writing. But one person said (I’m paraphrasing from our hour-long conversation), “You know you can teach at a community college with just an MA degree. If you want to teach and do some research, you don’t have to get a PhD.” And I didn’t have an immediate response to this, but it did get me to ask myself, “What is the purpose of my MA degree? Is it to get into a PhD program? If I wasn’t wanting to pursue a doctoral degree, what would this MA do for me?” While I probably should have asked these questions before starting my MA program, I wasn’t really able to answer the question on the spot.

In seeking out possible answers to this question and connecting it back to the research presented in this thesis, in the remainder of this discussion chapter I will:

- 1) Restate my original research question for this project;
- 2) Offer overall insights from this research project; and
- 3) Present limitations of this study and provide further considerations and questions I believe need to be asked and addressed.

### **MA Students as Researchers**

This study attempted to address the following research question: How are graduate MA programs in Writing Studies preparing MA students as researchers? Two related goals of this project

were to assess whether these MA programs are aligning practices with the values of the field and understand what kinds of research MA students in Writing Studies are doing as a part of their MA programs.

The intent of this convergent mixed methods study was to combine findings from a qualitative exploration of program websites, to distribute a survey instrument to MA program directors or other appropriate faculty in Writing Studies, and then analyze the findings alongside the values of the field. The research had three phases:

- 1) The first phase of the study was a qualitative exploration of the websites of MA programs in Writing Studies through a focused content analysis centered around research (Chapter 3).
- 2) The second phase was a quantitative survey instrument created and distributed to English Graduate Program Directors, research methods professors, or another appropriate person at programs that have an MA in Writing Studies. This survey addressed how MA programs are preparing and developing MA students as researchers and included questions about what types of research MA students are doing (Chapter 4).
- 3) The third phase was the converging of the previous two phases and is represented in this discussion chapter. The findings from both phases were synthesized to understand how MA programs are preparing MA students to be researchers and then make recommendations for programs and future research in Writing Studies.

In answer to the question, “How are graduate MA programs in Writing Studies preparing MA students as researchers?” it appears that MA programs in Writing Studies are providing minimal preparation to master’s students as researchers. According to the data from the content analysis and the survey, as well as revisiting scholarship outlined in the first chapter, MA programs in Writing



Studies are preparing (or attempting to prepare) MA graduate students as researchers in three ways: Expectations, Exposure, and Experiences.

### **Expectations**

The expectations of an MA program may be outlined in department or programs goals, but as one survey participant noted, their program does “Not [have] a specific stated goal, but we expect students to learn about field-specific research.” Therefore, when considering the expectations programs have for MA students as researchers, there may not be concrete statements or goals made available to students, which means students may not be aware of the expectations a program has for them as researchers. If a program does not have a specific goal, I am curious how a program is able to assess how their graduate students are progressing through their program and how a program is able to articulate the value of a program to prospective and current students. Coupling a lack of explicit expectations with various culminating projects and research opportunities, individual students in programs may not recognize how these invisible expectations can impact their time in a program. If a program requires an original culminating research project but has not communicated what “original” or “research” means to a student, this can frustrate students when their culminating projects do not meet the standards or expectations of the department. While this may be a trivial consideration, even communicating expected deadlines to graduate students in writing are ways programs can be explicit with expectations.

I was surprised to find in the content analysis and the survey that not every MA program requires or even offers a research methods course. The biggest surprise with this finding was the program I analyzed which offers a research methods course but does not count this course towards the degree plan for the MA. The research methods course is a requirement for the PhD program at this institution, therefore, I am curious as to why the research methods course does not count toward the degree program for MA students but MA students are required to take at least one

literature course (it is an MA in English degree with a rhetoric and composition focus). Additionally, in the survey, a participant noted their department is currently working on “getting the course on the books as an official offering,” but they had previously offered a research methods course as an independent study to MA students because the participant was not sure how students were expected to know how to conduct a research study for a thesis without learning about research methods (although that participant did mention that students could have learned methods within other classes, which I will address in the “Exposure” section below). Therefore, departments may or may not offer a research methods course, or may offer the course at different times in a student’s experience in a program, which could be harmful for students completing a culminating project or thesis. For example, if a program offers a research methods course every other year in the Spring semester, then MA students may be taking the research methods course as they are completing their culminating project. This would not be an issue if a program does not require original research for a culminating project, but for programs that require primary research within a master’s project or thesis, then the timeline of the research methods course would need to be considered and intentionally planned for incoming cohorts (although I recognize that smaller departments may not be able to offer a research methods course every year).

Additionally, there is a lack of information (at least according to my research) about what possible PhD students should know entering a PhD program, especially PhD programs that require a master’s degree for admittance. While the focus of this project was on MA programs in Writing Studies, if MA programs serve as bridges to future endeavors, then establishing and recognizing benchmarks for students’ future endeavors is necessary. While I am not suggesting every PhD program should create a list of requirements for what incoming graduate students should be able to do or know, I do think there could be national guidelines or frameworks (akin to the Lumina Foundation frameworks) to help faculty in MA programs analyze their program

offerings/curriculum, which would also help MA students understand before, during, and after their experience in the MA program what they should be able to accomplish. This may sound as utopic as Mossman's MA program that effectively navigates the New Economy, but I think when each school is allowed to craft their MA program without any larger/national discussions, usually with a tacit understanding of curriculum (as mentioned in Brown, Torres, Enos, and Juergensmeyer's review of MA programs from 2005<sup>8</sup>), then can an MA student expect to receive a similar education, or have a similar experience, in any Writing Studies MA program?

Overall, expectations can change depending on individual programs. While programs may have program goals or even MA specific goals, as mentioned in the content analysis chapter (chapter 2), I am curious if MA students would be able to verbalize these goals if asked. I know that I am not able to list my current MA program goals off the top of my head. Additionally, for the 30 programs I analyzed, the program goals were primarily located on a program's main webpage and were not mentioned in other pages. Therefore, these goals may be understood to impact the overall design of an MA program, but users are seemingly expected to make these connections themselves. The lack of explicit connections to particular program goals I believe mirrors a lack of explicit degree goals. Therefore, when considering how MA programs are developing MA students as researchers, the lack of overall guidance or discussion on a national scale can impact how individual programs conceive as the purpose of the MA degree. If faculty in a program consider the MA degree to be a strictly professional degree, then there might be a lack of attention paid to developing students as researchers (unless programs emphasize action- or teacher-research seen in the chapters by Fox and Lovejoy; Adkins). Additionally, the answers from the survey regarding secondary research can be

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<sup>8</sup> They note most programs "offer core courses in areas such as the history of rhetoric, research methods, theories of professional communication, technical editing, rhetorical criticism, and pedagogy, [programs] also appear to be developing courses in response to a contemporary context—the theoretical trends, cultural shifts, technological innovations, institutional pressures, and workplace realities." (10)

telling in this instance as well. If faculty in a program indicate their program does not require secondary research as a part of the MA program, then what are students reading and what are students learning. Even in professional or applied degrees, students need to be exposed to existing research.

## **Exposure**

This understanding, and critique of, curriculum offered in different MA programs also aligns with MA student exposure to research in the program. When asked in the survey, “What other opportunities exist for MA students in your programs to learn about research besides being a research assistant or taking a research methods course?” one participant noted, “They [MA students] read a lot! lol [sic] And we encourage conference presentations and publishing.” Another participant wrote, “Professional development workshops on faculty research projects; students presentations on research projects.” Data from the content analysis echoes this concept of exposure: Course descriptions and program descriptions mention exposure to existing research as being an important component of MA programs. Combining the responses from the survey and the data from the content analysis, there appears to be an understanding that exposing students to research, or having students read existing research, will help students become researchers. This seems to match the CEE/ELATE position statement, “The Teacher-Research Connection,” that effective teachers are well versed in existing research and will then (hopefully) implement this kind of research in their own classrooms; however, missing from the CEE’s position statement and the program or course descriptions is *how* teachers or students will implement or conduct this research. Just because I have read an ethnography does not mean I will have all the tools, understanding, and ability to conduct my own ethnography. Even reading Writing Studies research methods texts does not automatically equate being able to conduct research. Like Rebecca Rickly and Kelli Cargile Cook discussed in the introduction to their special issue of the *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, students should

be exposed to the research process well before their dissertation (this also matches ideas from Wang; Hunt, Mehta, and Chan).

This also reflects the discussion from the “Expectations” section of this chapter. If students are expected to pick up research methods from their various courses, including non-research methods courses, pedagogically I have to ask, “Are faculty being explicit in explaining these methodologies and methods as students are reading existing research?” When reading articles for my non-research methods course, I didn’t stop and interrogate how a specific scholar was theory building or what kind of coding schema they were using unless the author was explicit with both their methods and a metacommentary about their research process (hence Smagorinsky’s insistence of a clear methods section!); nor did my professors ask me to identify the type of scholarship represented in a specific article (although this practice may differ depending on the instructor, program expectations, etc.). Therefore, I am hesitant to tacitly agree that exposure to research creates researchers. While I think exposure to research is an important component to any endeavor, this reliance on exposure (whether that comes from reading or attending professional development opportunities/presentations/conferences), cannot be the only way a program prepares MA students as researchers or else MA students may be at a disadvantage when it comes to producing original research, either for a culminating project for their MA degree or if they decide to pursue a PhD and design/conduct a dissertation level research project.

Finally, in considering exposure to research, many survey participants noted MA students had the opportunity to work with a faculty member on a faculty member’s research project or through faculty mentorship opportunities. However, participants noted these are not requirements, but are opportunities left for MA students to pursue and navigate. Therefore, this may privilege students who are comfortable approaching faculty about collaborating on a project, especially if the program itself does not have a structured research assistant opportunity embedded within it. This

would also privilege students who are aware of this opportunity. While a program website may indicate students may collaborate with faculty, I would be curious to know how programs communicate this to students and how individual professors communicate this to students as well.

A drawback of MA programs is the typical two-year program length. Therefore, if a student is able to work alongside a professor, either during their first or second year, or in the summer in between the two years, then this could be frustrating for faculty who are encountering a revolving-door of MA students and would most likely not allow an MA student to see the project from the idea stage to the completion stage (unless they stay at the MA program for a PhD or collaborate with faculty after they graduate from the MA program). Additionally, faculty may be working on a variety of projects with a variety of scopes. If a faculty member is doing a small action-based research project on teaching assistants in the program, then maybe an MA student could be there from start to finish; however, if a faculty member is working on a longitudinal project started many years before a student started their MA, then a graduate student may not know what kind of work went into the project (unless the faculty member took detailed researcher notes through the entire process). Finally, if MA students are used as research assistants with faculty, there is a possibility that students will be transcribers or will be tasked with other smaller, or less data-analysis oriented or data-intensive tasks. Again, exposure to a component of the research process may be helpful for a student but will not help them design and implement an entire project, no matter the scope of said project. Nor is it fair to expect faculty members to create smaller-scale research projects that would perfectly align with the entrance of a new cohort of MA students (not to mention PhD students at institutions that have both MA and PhD programs).

Therefore, in considering exposure to research, MA students are being tasked with internalizing research methodologies and methods as a part of their development as researchers. This may be effective if faculty are explicit with these moves as students are being exposed to

scholarship in their courses, but the language from the content analysis and the survey do not reflect an explicit or conscious effort to do so. In the survey, one participant noted, “We are only able to offer a very limited number of courses in writing studies/rhetoric per semester....This means that most faculty try to teach research methods embedded in courses on other topics.” Another participant wrote, “All of our graduate courses include instruction in research methods.” But I would be curious to know if this work on research methods is explicit and if MA students would be able to articulate similar experiences.

## **Experiences**

Finally, MA programs are developing students as researchers through experiences. While I have already mentioned the opportunity some MA students may have as research assistants and through mentorship opportunities, one participant from the survey noted this was only available to PhD students in their program. Therefore, if a program offers both an MA and PhD in Writing Studies, careful attention must be paid to what opportunities MA students have, not just PhD students (although this also depends on budgetary and time constraints). Additionally, these experiences, as noted in the “Exposure” section, may not provide enough scope or space for an MA student to understand the entire process of a research inquiry. It is unrealistic to believe MA programs can develop particular experiences for all MA students to be mentored as researchers; however, this can be a component of an MA program alongside coursework like research methods courses and culminating projects. To address the various experiences a student may have in a program, one survey participant wrote, “Students who write a thesis would have...explicit instruction [in research methods] leading up to writing their thesis. The program is set up to steer students toward an internship, however, rather than writing a thesis, so the experience of explicit instruction of research methods outside of our required research methods course is atypical.” For this participant, their program collaborates with other organizations to provide MA students with

experiences that best fit the goals of their program (although it appears as if students may still write a traditional thesis if they desire).

In identifying culminating projects, the data from the content analysis and the survey both provide insight to what MA students are expected to produce to graduate from the program. The most popular response when asked about culminating projects in the survey was, “Master’s Thesis (75-100 pages)” with 18 mentions but “Master’s Project (30-50 pages)” was a close second with 16 mentions (participants could select more than one option). Five participants in the survey indicated MA students are expected to complete comprehensive exams for their culminating project, and eleven of the programs analyzed in the content analysis included comprehensive exams as a culminating project. While this may be modelled off of PhD comprehensive exams, I am curious about the transferability of this type of culminating project. However, I think this reflects the discussion outlined in the “Expectations” section of this chapter. If MA students are expected to know about research instead of produce research, then a comprehensive exam may be applicable. If MA students are expected to produce research as well as know about research, then a comprehensive exam will not reflect a student’s ability to produce research. In providing students with options, one participant from the survey wrote, “Can opt for a revised course paper and oral exam on reading lists” or do a thesis/project. This choice may allow a student to decide what would be best for their future; however, I still think this reflects the economic reality Mossman mentions, although it refers to the economic reality of academia. If tenure-track positions are dwindling and graduate students are expected to have publications to their name before starting in a faculty position, then the move from master’s theses to more journal-article length master’s projects can make sense. The “publish or perish” mantra echoed in the halls of academia can mean MA students are no longer required to produce sustained research projects but can produce genres more akin to the economic reality of the academic job market. While some may praise these changes, I am curious



about the impact these decisions have on students in PhD programs where dissertations are not a collection of 3 to 5 articles but are intensive sustained research projects.

For example, in the chapter, “The Locally Responsive, Socially Productive MA in Composition” by Kory Lawson Ching, Tara Lockhart, and Mark Roberge in *Degree of Change*, the authors explain their decision to change the culminating project their MA students were expected to produce. The authors note the expectations shifted from a “a traditional five-chapter thesis, typically based on a yearlong qualitative research project, followed by a formal thesis defense” to a “portfolio project that fed directly into students’ professional development as teachers” (5). This shift was a result of alumni from the program indicating their frustration with a lack of teacher preparation in their new positions as community college instructors. To these students, the thesis did not provide them with the experience necessary to teach at a community college. However, when considering habits of mind, I am curious how a shift from a thesis to a teaching portfolio could potentially impact a student in their new position. The data from the content analysis and the survey suggest MA thesis projects are no longer a de facto disciplinary norm; therefore, Lawson Ching, Lockhart, and Roberge’s chapter may provide an insight to why culminating projects are shifting and changing. A program may be responding to student needs and values, offering portfolios and other professional-oriented projects which can benefit a student’s future goals. While I cannot offer any insights into these students’ or programs’ perspectives, I am curious how research inquiries, either a smaller research inquiry like teacher- or action-research, or a larger research inquiry like a MA thesis, are being framed and discussed with students. If a student understands the value of a research inquiry and is able to create a research inquiry that can be applicable for their future goals, then the skills learned through the research process may be useful. Additionally, I am curious what kinds of research the students in Lawson Ching, Lockhart, and Roberge’s program were conducting for their theses before the program switched to a portfolio. There may be types of research that are more

readily transferable to future career goals, while other types of research may not transfer as explicitly. While transferability is not the focus of this thesis,<sup>9</sup> I think it is a concept that could help programs describe the benefits of producing a master's thesis or research project, or at least providing it as an option like one survey participant mentioned. Allowing students to decide what type of culminating project works best for them may be a way to provide exposure and experience for MA students as researchers in a program; however, this would need to be made explicit to students.

Overall, the experiences offered to MA students in programs also differs widely by program. Whether the culminating project is a master's thesis, master's project, a portfolio, a collection of journal-article length essays, comprehensive exams, among others, the culminating project reflects the overall expectations faculty and programs have for MA students in that program. But to assume prospective MA students will understand this before entering a program I think is misguided. These experiences are embedded in expectations and need to be made explicit to students, and I believe this conversation needs to take place on a larger scale, not just in individual programs, to better identify the purpose of MA programs in Writing Studies and how these programs are preparing MA students for the future, including their identities as researchers.

### **Assessing Practices to the Values of the Field**

One of the goals for this project was to identify whether the practices of MA programs aligned with the values of the field when it comes to preparing MA students as researchers. However, because there are no concrete guidelines or expectations from national organizations regarding MA programs in Writing Studies, I cannot offer a critique or confirmation of whether or not MA programs are preparing MA students as researchers in accordance with disciplinary standards. Therefore, individual programs are developing their own goals and outcomes, but as

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<sup>9</sup> See Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak for a more formal discussion of transfer. While their book deals with undergraduate students in composition courses, I think a larger discussion of transfer is needed when considering graduate education and graduate students.

noted previously, these may not be clear to prospective and current students. I believe there is a missed opportunity from national organizations like NCTE, CCCC's, CWPA, and others which could help kickstart a conversation about the overall purpose of the MA. While the majority of MA programs are two years in length, and there have been researchers who have tried to wrestle with making the MA a more professional-focused endeavor (Strain and Potter; Vandenburg and Clary-Lemon; Knievel and Sheridan-Rabideau), this still does not identify the overall expectation of what a student leaving an MA program will be able to do or know. If programs are idiosyncratic in terms of local exigence and curricular offerings, this presents the following question: Should an MA student know their future career or academic goals before starting a particular MA program? This would mean that the MA program would solely be a bridge and would not be considered a space of exploration. Many MA programs in Writing Studies may be the first time a student is exposed to the theories, methods, and sub-disciplines within Writing Studies (although this may change in the future based on the proliferation of Writing Studies undergraduate programs in the United States). While I could not find this information, I would be curious to know how many students in Writing Studies MA programs come to the program without previously taking any writing studies courses (for example, I do not have a bachelor's degree in English and found my way to Writing Studies circuitously), and would be interested to know how many PhD graduate students in Writing Studies programs do not have an MA degree in Writing Studies. Because of the relatively recent development of Writing Studies as a discipline (sixty years or so is relatively young compared to traditional English, Literature, Rhetoric, or Linguistics programs), there has been a lot of scholarship devoted to detailing the narrative of the creation of rhetoric and composition/Writing Studies and its beginnings in English departments (see Reynolds, Dolmage, Bizzell, and Herzberg; Ritter and Matsuda; Royster and Williams; and Parker). If the discussions about the MA in Writing Studies (and not to mention labor) are conflated with discussions about the MA in English generally, then there

may need to be a larger disciplinary analysis of how Writing Studies programs in English departments compare to independent Writing Studies programs, and if these respective programs have different expectations for their graduates.

Additionally, larger field-wide conversations about what counts as research needs to happen when discussing what MA students should learn in a program. If programs are relying on faculty experiences and expertise to design research methods courses (if these are even offered in a program), then the expectation may be that new MA applicants will be aware of what types of research are taught in a specific program. However, as I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this assumes an MA student will already know their career path/goal before starting their MA and the MA no longer serves as a way to survey the discipline. This may be possible if a student has a background in Writing Studies from a bachelor's degree, but this may not reflect the current reality of many graduate students. I would argue this move could detract from a liberal-arts approach to the humanities, which isn't necessarily a bad thing, but at least needs to be questioned before drastic changes are made to MA programs. Additionally, this type of know-before-you-go attitude relies on an economic/job market-based viewpoint where an MA student will already have knowledge of current trends in the job market. While this may be applicable to graduate students who start their graduate program many years or decades after their bachelor's degree, can programs and scholars in Writing Studies expect "traditional" undergraduate students who immediately enter graduate programs to have this type of foreknowledge? Therefore, in considering student populations entering graduate programs, scholars in the discipline at large may be wise in considering the economic reality of MA students (like articles found in Strain and Potter's *Degree of Change*), however, this will take more explicit communication to potential MA students. And as evident in my research, the programs I analyzed for the content analysis did not discuss this reality for prospective graduate

students beyond mentioning there are a variety of employment opportunities available to graduates with a Writing Studies MA degree from their program.

### **Limitations and Future Considerations**

While MA students are minimally prepared as researchers in MA program through expectations, exposure, and experiences, this study does not have a clear answer, nor does it offer concrete steps a program can take to create impactful learning opportunities for MA students to develop their research identity. This is in part due to the limitations of this particular study. One of the primary limitations to this study is the lack of MA student voices except my own. Since this study was designed to identify how MA Writing Studies programs are preparing students as researchers, the focus of this study was on program descriptions and faculty awareness and knowledge of MA student experiences in their programs. Future studies should include MA student voices, especially when considering an emic perspective of programs preparing students as researchers. Existing scholarship is often guilty of not including current MA student perspectives when discussing the purpose and reality of MA programs in Writing Studies (and English in general), and I believe future studies would benefit from learning how students are vocalizing and conceptualizing their own development as scholars, researchers, and teachers.

The content analysis of MA Writing Studies programs in this thesis does not provide probabilistic statistical information about the reality of all MA programs in Writing Studies. Instead, it offers a snapshot of thirty programs which may or may not represent the reality of MA students in other programs. Therefore, the data from the content analysis should not be considered the current reality for all MA programs in Writing Studies, nor should it represent the expectations, exposure, and experiences some MA students may receive in a program.<sup>10</sup> This is further complicated by an

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<sup>10</sup> This also can be further complicated by the fact that two MA students in the same program may have different experiences based on background, academic interests, and external and internal factors such as marginalized identities, disabilities, and family/labor constraints among others.

email I received when I sent out the survey. A faculty member from a program sent me an email noting they currently do not offer an MA in Writing Studies since they are going through a curriculum review, however, the website for this program still listed the MA as a possibility for prospective students and included a deadline for MA applications (this program was not represented in the content analysis). Therefore, when conducting the content analysis, there is potential that a program I analyzed no longer offers an MA in Writing Studies and the information could be outdated. However, I still believe the information from the analysis represents content prospective and current students would use when learning about a program.

Additionally, when conducting the content analysis, I did not incorporate user-experience research (as mentioned in Chapter 3), which can provide insight to a user's experience on a particular website. For example, if a program includes information hidden behind a log-in screen, then a prospective student may not have enough information to make an informed decision about whether or not a program is a strong fit for that student. If a program has dead hyperlinks or other problems with their webpage, this will impact a user's search for and access to information. In terms of the online program descriptions, I did not reach out to faculty from these programs with questions about who controls their webpage, which could impact the material found on the program websites. Finally, I did not "weigh" the various counts when doing holistic coding. For example, if a program had four paragraphs about a research methods course and another program had a sentence, then each was counted as a presence of the holistic code "Research Methods Course Description" for the respective program. In future studies, this data could be further analyzed to identify the language choices made when discussing research and could provide more insights to the various "weight" a program may offer when describing research on their webpages. Using a critical lens for this type of analysis would also offer further insights about program descriptions.

In terms of the survey, a 33% response rate (41 responses out of a potential 125) does not provide probabilistic statistical analysis. Therefore, the data from the survey analysis chapter presented a snapshot of 41 participants. As mentioned in the survey chapter (Chapter 4), the anonymous responses meant I had no way of knowing who was taking the survey or if two people from the same program took the survey (however, in analyzing the data I was not able to find two participant responses with the same information, so I do not think two people from the same institution took the survey). Additionally, there are natural limitations based on the questions I asked. I do not know if participants have knowledge of every MA student in the program, and when asked to identify the types of research students completed in the past 5 years, the responses may have been incomplete based on participant knowledge. Additionally, it is not possible to list every type of research associated with Writing Studies. While I attempted to offer the most common types of methodologies and methods based on research methods texts (both in Writing Studies and outside Writing Studies), the fact that scholars in Writing Studies borrow or use research methodologies and methods from other disciplines means the list will never be comprehensive while still being usable/navigable in a survey. This also reflects limitations on language. I did not include “Department Chair” as an option for participants to select based on my belief that the current program chair of my department probably would not be able to identify the types of research MA students in the Writing Studies track of the program had completed in the past five years. Therefore, my own limitations and potential biases impacted the language choice I used when providing participants with options. While this does not mean the results from the survey are invalid (participants could write in their position), I still think it bears mentioning in my attempt to be transparent, both with the data represented in this thesis and in my analysis.

Overall, the limitations to the study suggest more research is needed to better understand how MA students in Writing Studies programs are being developed as researchers, but also reflect

the current reality of the scholarship in Writing Studies. The MA in Writing Studies is still an idiosyncratic enterprise and specific programs have to make choices when designing (or redesigning) curriculum, expectations, and experiences for MA students.

In terms of future considerations and further questions that I believe need to be asked, these include larger disciplinary questions and smaller program-level questions. In terms of larger disciplinary questions, the three primary questions that need to be asked and scrutinized are:

- 1) What is the purpose of an MA degree in Writing Studies?
- 2) Should Writing Studies programs be housed in English departments?
- 3) What counts as research in Writing Studies?

The last two questions are being discussed in conferences like *Conference on College Composition and Communication*, *Council for Writing Program Administrators*, *International Writing Center Association*, *National Council of Teachers of English*, and others, but there are no clear-cut answers to these questions. I believe addressing the latter two questions would help illuminate the first question and could lead to larger discussions about the expectations, exposure, and experiences offered to MA graduate students in programs. As scholars wrestle with whether or not the MA degree in Writing Studies should reflect a more professional or practical degree purpose, I think this line of questioning will help scholars interrogate the practices of their own programs, but will also help students better understand the purpose of their degree, especially if they are not really sure what they are going to do with their degree when they enter a program. Research like Benjamin Miller's article about dissertations in Writing Studies PhD programs, "Mapping the Methods of Composition/Rhetoric Dissertations: A 'Landscape Plotted and Pieced,'" could be done for MA level culminating projects (although these would be more difficult to access than dissertations). This type of large-scale analysis of what MA students are doing and what types of research MA students are producing in Writing Studies programs could not only locate trends in MA programs, but also help faculty in PhD



programs discuss what they expect from students entering a particular doctoral program, or could help faculty identify research that could be more suited for non-academic positions if a program was wanting to transition to a more professional-focused or applied MA.

In terms of smaller program-level questions, I think faculty should ask, “What expectations do we have for MA students in this program?,” which in turn will create discussion around what types of scholarship or research students are exposed to and what experiences students will have in the program. While a master’s program two-year sprint is not a lot of time, the majority of graduate students in a program are master’s students; therefore, careful consideration of the MA program is needed (instead of relying on the potential harmful assertions of “This is how I was trained” and “This is how we’ve always done things.”).

Finally, I think future research needs to be conducted exploring the transferability of research skills to new contexts, both academic and non-academic. My intuition tells me learning to do research is beneficial for anyone, but intuition is not enough. Scholars need to understand what MA students are taking with them from a program, and a sustained inquiry into the habits of mind research develops and the transferability of research perspectives/processes could help scholars and students understand how an MA program in Writing Studies is more than a professional degree needed in a neoliberal economy.

### **Coda**

In this thesis I’ve written about the intuition I have about research being a way to practice the habits of mind (CWPA, NCTE, and NWP). And in going through the process of designing this thesis project, I believe I have practiced these habits of mind, whether I was able to recognize it in a moment or not. In closing I will reflect (and offer a short paragraph) on how I believe I have used these particular skills in this research process because I believe exploring how someone goes through the research process is just as important as the research presented. Each of the following

habits of mind and the definitions, written in italics, are taken from the CWPA, NCTE, and NWP's "Frameworks for Success in Postsecondary Writing" (1).

1) *Curiosity – the desire to know more about the world.*

Beyond the frame of the research question woven throughout this thesis in trying to question how MA programs in Writing Studies are developing students as researchers, I practiced curiosity in trying to challenge and question my own ideas about the data. Coding is a process of attentively and curiously analyzing data, but I had to want to know what was in the program descriptions and had to re-read the data from the content analysis multiple times to ensure I was not directing the data but that the data was directing me.

2) *Openness – the willingness to consider new ways of being and thinking in the world.*

As I went through the content analysis and the survey, I was also applying to PhD programs. The experience of analyzing program descriptions led me to ask different questions of possible PhD programs and led to me reaching out to current faculty and grad students. Additionally, when the data from the content analysis and survey showed comprehensive exams as being much more popular than I had imagined, I had to consider why this is without judgement (although there was a little bit of judgement on my part when I first came across that data). If a program's goals match a comprehensive exam, then maybe it is beneficial for students in those programs to complete an exam. And it also provides potential PhD students with exposure to an experience they will most likely face in their PhD comprehensive exams. I cannot say that by doing a thesis I have learned more than someone doing a comprehensive exam; I can only say we have most likely learned different things, which is not a bad thing.

3) *Engagement – a sense of investment and involvement in learning.*

A thesis project of this scope meant I had to be interested in the topic and be interested in what I would find. As a current MA student, I am interested in what an MA program offers (with a bit of hindsight) and think the discussion needs to continue to take place both nationally and locally. I am invested in Writing Studies and preparing MA students as teachers, researchers, and scholars, and hope to teach graduate students someday (with the data from this project in mind!).

4) *Creativity – the ability to use novel approaches for generating, investigating, and representing ideas.*

I was a bit uncomfortable writing the vignettes of this thesis because I had the faulty assumption that a culminating research thesis needed to be objective and stick to the facts. However, when my thesis chair mentioned I could use my own experiences to help illuminate a certain passage or idea, I re-thought about the purpose of this thesis. Yes, there is data. But there is also a story behind the decisions I made doing this thesis, and my decision to include these vignettes (not to mention this coda) is a way to try and complicate specific genres associated with research. This is not a qualitative narrative research inquiry, but narrative is still a way of knowing and can be a validation strategy to be transparent with a reader.

5) *Persistence – the ability to sustain interest in and attention to short- and long-term projects.*

The foundation for this thesis was developed in the research methods course I took (although it reflects a larger interest/curiosity I had before the class) in the spring of 2019. I developed the idea and talked to my current thesis chair (who was teaching the class) about the project and mentioned that I was interested in doing a thesis instead of the required master's level project for my MA. I had to navigate the university and department structures to get approved to even do a thesis, and even when I was running around campus getting paperwork to the responsible parties, I was determined to complete this thesis and knew the

annoyance of paperwork would pay off. I also had to get over a fear of emailing strangers when I sent out the survey or when asking Dr. Caswell to complete user-testing for the survey. I talked to other people about my nerves and then realized that receiving a “No” was the worst that could happen (hopefully). I also had to learn as I was working on this thesis, especially with creating “mailing” scripts in Microsoft Word to send out the survey. Mistakes were made, but nevertheless, I persisted.

- 6) *Responsibility – the ability to take ownership of one’s actions and understand the consequences of those actions for oneself and others.*

I have a personal responsibility to the reader to be transparent with the data. While I have not included the entirety of the data collected in the content analysis (although I would gladly share this with an interested reader!), I included the survey instrument (Appendix D) to this thesis in hopes a reader will use it, or create a survey similar to it, to further question and analyze the purpose of an MA degree and interrogate how programs are developing MA students as researchers, scholars, and teachers.

- 7) *Flexibility – the ability to adapt to situations, expectations, or demands.*

Timelines are wonderful and optimistic at the beginning of a project, but complications always arise. I had to be flexible with my own expectations when I knew I was not going to be able to meet a deadline, so I asked for small extensions so I would be able to turn in work that was not harried and rushed simply because of a deadline.

- 8) *Metacognition – the ability to reflect on one’s own thinking as well as on the individual and cultural processes used to structure knowledge.*

As I mentioned in the “Creativity” section, I practiced metacognition when deciding how to incorporate the vignettes and this coda. I had to think about how knowledge is produced in the field of Writing Studies and reflect on the genre constraints/considerations of a master’s

level thesis. I also talked to my thesis chair, my committee, and other grad students in my program about how my research was going. I reflected on how I was feeling, what patterns I was noticing, what additional questions I had, and what I would have done differently if given the chance. These conversations led me to think about my own thinking as a researcher throughout the process of completing this thesis.

These instances of the habits of mind I used while completing this thesis are not close to being comprehensive but provide some insight into my intuition about the research process. While this is not the same as researcher notes or a research journal, it is a start to a larger conversation I think is missing from many research methods texts and research based-scholarship: A peek behind the curtain and an acknowledgement that research is messy and non-linear at times, but it is important and worth the fuss.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: List of MA Programs in Writing Studies for Content Analysis

#### Writing Studies MA Programs: Randomized for Study

	Randomized List	Number
R1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. U Nevada-Reno</li> <li>2. Kansas St U</li> <li>3. U Kansas-Main</li> <li>4. U Illinois: Urbana-Champaign</li> <li>5. Virginia Commonwealth U</li> <li>6. U Alabama</li> <li>7. U Maryland-College Park</li> <li>8. Arizona St U</li> <li>9. U Colorado-Denver</li> <li>10. U South Carolina-Columbia</li> <li>11. North Carolina St U</li> <li>12. U Washington-Seattle</li> <li>13. Georgetown U</li> <li>14. CUNY-City College of New York</li> <li>15. U Oklahoma</li> <li>16. Michigan St U</li> <li>17. U Utah</li> <li>18. Florida International U</li> <li>19. U Nebraska-Lincoln</li> <li>20. U Alabama-Birmingham</li> <li>21. Georgia St U</li> <li>22. U Louisville</li> <li>23. Montana St U-Bozeman</li> <li>24. U Nevada-Las Vegas</li> <li>25. U Central Florida</li> <li>26. U Texas-El Paso</li> <li>27. Purdue U-Main</li> <li>28. U Hawaii-Manoa</li> <li>29. Indiana U-Bloomington</li> <li>30. Florida State U</li> <li>31. Washington St U</li> <li>32. U Tennessee-Knoxville</li> <li>33. U South Florida-Main Campus</li> <li>34. Colorado St U</li> <li>35. U Georgia</li> <li>36. Oklahoma St U-Main</li> <li>37. U New Mexico-Main</li> <li>38. Oregon St U</li> <li>39. Wayne St U</li> </ol>	9
R2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ball St U</li> <li>2. Rowan U</li> <li>3. Michigan Tech U</li> <li>4. IU-PU-Indianapolis</li> <li>5. Old Dominion U</li> <li>6. Texas A&amp;M U-Corpus Christi</li> <li>7. DePaul U</li> <li>8. Loyola Marymount U</li> <li>9. U Louisiana-Lafayette</li> <li>10. U Toledo</li> </ol>	9

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>11. South Dakota St U</li> <li>12. North Dakota St U</li> <li>13. U Texas-San Antonio</li> <li>14. U Maine-Orono</li> <li>15. U Missouri-St. Louis</li> <li>16. U Nebraska-Omaha</li> <li>17. Ohio U-Main</li> <li>18. Rutgers St U-Camden</li> <li>19. San Diego St U</li> <li>20. Nova Southeastern U</li> <li>21. U Idaho</li> <li>22. Seton Hall U</li> <li>23. Kent St-Kent</li> <li>24. Texas State U</li> <li>25. U Wyoming</li> <li>26. U North Carolina-Greensboro</li> <li>27. U of Missouri, Kansas City</li> <li>28. Southern Ill U-Carbondale</li> <li>29. Central Michigan U</li> <li>30. U Texas Rio Grande Valley</li> <li>31. Saint Louis U-Main</li> <li>32. Wright St U-Main</li> <li>33. East Carolina U</li> <li>34. Boise St U</li> <li>35. U Massachusetts-Boston</li> <li>36. Northern Arizona U</li> <li>37. Miami U</li> </ol>	
R3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. U Findlay</li> <li>2. U Michigan-Flint</li> <li>3. Northern Kentucky U</li> <li>4. Creighton U</li> <li>5. U North Florida</li> <li>6. U Tennessee-Chattanooga</li> <li>7. Cal St U-Fresno</li> <li>8. Missouri St U</li> <li>9. Texas Woman's U</li> <li>10. Indiana St U</li> <li>11. Southern Ill U-Edwardsville</li> </ol>	3
M1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. West Chester U Pennsylvania</li> <li>2. U of North Alabama</li> <li>3. Eastern Kentucky U</li> <li>4. Cal St U-Northridge</li> <li>5. Sonoma State</li> <li>6. Cal St U-Stanislaus</li> <li>7. Kean U</li> <li>8. St. Cloud St U</li> <li>9. Salisbury U</li> <li>10. Northwestern St U</li> <li>11. Northeastern Illinois U</li> <li>12. Coastal Carolina</li> <li>13. Cal St U-Chico</li> <li>14. U Central Oklahoma</li> <li>15. Abilene Christian U</li> <li>16. National U</li> <li>17. Cal St U-Dominguez Hills</li> <li>18. Monmouth U</li> <li>19. IU-PU-Fort Wayne</li> <li>20. Cal St Poly U-Pomona</li> <li>21. Purdue U-Calumet</li> <li>22. Saint Joseph's U</li> </ol>	7

	23. CUNY-Lehman Coll 24. Governors State U 25. San Francisco St U 26. Pittsburg St U 27. Cal St U-Sacramento 28. Cal St U-San Bernardino 29. Eastern Illinois U	
M2	1. Northern Michigan U 2. Humboldt St U 3. U Minnesota-Duluth 4. Missouri Western St U 5. Henderson St U 6. John Carroll U 7. Texas A&M University-Texarkana 8. Indiana U-South Bend	2
M3	1. Indiana University-East	0

## Appendix B: Holistic Coding Schema

[illegible]

15	R2	✓			✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		✓		7
16	R2	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	8
17	R2	✓	✓		✓			✓	✓			✓	✓		✓		8
18	R2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓							✓			✓	7
TOTAL R2		5	3	5	7	6	3	1	1	0	0	3	7	2	3	6	52
19	R3	✓	✓	✓		✓						✓	✓			✓	7
20	R3	✓		✓	✓	✓								✓			5
21	R3	✓		✓		✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	7
TOTAL R3		3	1	3	1	3	1	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	1	2	19
22	M 1			✓		✓							✓				3
23	M 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓		✓	✓	9
24	M 1	✓	✓			✓									✓		4
25	M 1	✓		✓	✓		✓						✓		✓		6
26	M 1	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						✓	✓		✓	✓	9
27	M 1	✓		✓	✓	✓							✓			✓	6
28	M 1				✓	✓							✓			✓	4
TOTAL M1		5	3	5	5	6	2	0	0	0	0	1	6	0	4	4	41
29	M 2				✓	✓								✓	✓	✓	5
30	M 2	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓				✓			✓	8
TOTAL M2		1	1	1	2	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	2	13

## Appendix C: Survey Email

Email sent October 1, 2019

Hello Dr. «Last\_Name»,

My name is Will Chesher and I am a second year MA student at Ball State University working on my Master's Thesis for Rhetoric and Composition.

The purpose of my study is to explore how MA programs in Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition are preparing their graduate students as researchers, including curriculum and experience. As MA programs are often considered bridges to PhD programs, positions in academia, and positions in industry (non-academia positions), I believe we need to understand how MA programs are serving students and training them for their future endeavors.

I have used both the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists table of Graduate Program contacts and materials from your program's webpage to identify the person most likely to know about the experiences of MA students in your Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition MA program.

To participate in this study, you must be over 18 years of age, currently serve as a director (or a title equivalent to director) of the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition graduate program at your university OR must have taught the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition graduate research methods course in the last 3 academic years, and must have knowledge of the curriculum and experiences of the MA students enrolled in your program.

If you believe you have received this email in error, please either forward this email to the person in your department who would best have knowledge of this topic or respond to this email with the contact information of that person.

This online survey is expected to take **10-15 minutes** to complete and includes questions about curriculum, student expectations, and completed graduate student research projects. Questions include multiple-choice, select all that apply, and text-entry.

Here is a link to the online Qualtrics survey: [\[Link\]](#)

**A Rung on the Ladder: An Exploration of Writing Studies MA Programs Preparing Students as Researchers**

**IRB 1490864-1**

The full informed consent letter is located in the attached Qualtrics survey, but if you have questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5052 or at [orihelp@bsu.edu](mailto:orihelp@bsu.edu).



Researcher Contact Information

Principle Investigator	Faculty Supervisor
Will Chesher, Graduate MA Student English-Rhetoric and Composition Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]	Dr. Jackie Grutsch McKinney English Department Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

Once again, here is a link to the Qualtrics survey: [Link]

Thank you for your time and your participation!

**Will Chesher**

*pronouns:* he/him/his

Writing Program Graduate Assistant Director  
 Graduate Assistant Instructor  
 English Department  
 Ball State University  
 [REDACTED]

---

Email sent October 31, 2019

Hello Dr. «Last\_Name»,

My name is Will Chesher and I am a second year MA student at Ball State University working on my Master's Thesis for Rhetoric and Composition. My thesis considers how MA programs in Writing Studies are preparing MA students as researchers.

At the beginning of October, I sent out an email seeking survey participants. If you have already taken the survey, please disregard this email and thank you for your participation!

If you have not taken the survey and wish to do so, I will be closing the survey on **Tuesday, November 12<sup>th</sup>**.

I have included the original email below with the overview of the study and IRB approval, but here is a direct link to the survey: [Link]

Thank you for your time and participation!

**Will Chesher**

*pronouns:* he/him/his

Writing Program Graduate Assistant Director  
Graduate Assistant Instructor  
English Department  
Ball State University  
[REDACTED]

Hello Dr. «Last\_Name»,

My name is Will Chesher and I am a second year MA student at Ball State University working on my Master's Thesis for Rhetoric and Composition.

The purpose of my study is to explore how MA programs in Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition are preparing their graduate students as researchers, including curriculum and experience. As MA programs are often considered bridges to PhD programs, positions in academia, and positions in industry (non-academia positions), I believe we need to understand how MA programs are serving students and training them for their future endeavors.

I have used both the Master's Degree Consortium of Writing Studies Specialists table of Graduate Program contacts and materials from your program's webpage to identify the person most likely to know about the experiences of MA students in your Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition MA program.

To participate in this study, you must be over 18 years of age, currently serve as a director (or a title equivalent to director) of the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition graduate program at your university OR must have taught the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition graduate research methods course in the last 3 academic years, and must have knowledge of the curriculum and experiences of the MA students enrolled in your program.

If you believe you have received this email in error, please either forward this email to the person in your department who would best have knowledge of this topic or respond to this email with the contact information of that person.

This online survey is expected to take **10-15 minutes** to complete and includes questions about curriculum, student expectations, and completed graduate student research projects. Questions include multiple-choice, select all that apply, and text-entry.

Here is a link to the online Qualtrics survey: [Link]

**A Rung on the Ladder: An Exploration of Writing Studies MA Programs Preparing Students as Researchers**

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Researcher Contact Information

Principle Investigator	Faculty Supervisor
Will Chesher, Graduate MA Student English-Rhetoric and Composition Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]	Dr. Jackie Grutsch McKinney English Department Ball State University Muncie, IN 47306 Telephone: [REDACTED] Email: [REDACTED]

Once again, here is a link to the Qualtrics survey: [Link]

Thank you for your time and your participation!

**Will Chesher**

*pronouns:* he/him/his

Writing Program Graduate Assistant Director  
 Graduate Assistant Instructor  
 English Department  
 Ball State University  
 [REDACTED]

## Appendix D: Survey Instrument

### A Rung on the Ladder: An Exploration of Writing Studies MA Programs Preparing Students as Researchers

IRB 1490864-1

#### **Study Purpose and Rationale**

The purpose of this study is to explore how MA programs in Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition are preparing their graduate students as researchers, including curriculum and experience. As MA programs are often considered bridges to PhD programs, positions in academia, and positions in industry (non-academia positions), we need to understand how MA programs are serving students and training them for their future endeavors.

#### **Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria**

To participate in this study, you must be over 18 years of age, currently serve as a director (or a title equivalent to director) of the Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition graduate program at your university OR have taught a graduate research methods course for Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition in the last 3 academic years, and must have knowledge of the curriculum and experiences of the MA students enrolled in your program.

#### **Participation Procedures and Duration**

This online survey is expected to take 10-15 minutes to complete and will include questions about curriculum, student expectations, and completed graduate student research projects. Questions include multiple-choice, select all that apply, and text-entry.

#### **Data Confidentiality or Anonymity**

All data will be maintained as anonymous and no identifying information such as names will appear in any publication or presentation of the data. The data will be presented in aggregate form (e.g. 90% of responses indicated...).

#### **Storage of Data and Data Retention Period**

Answers from the survey will be stored in Qualtrics and Box, a password protected online storage program associated with my Ball State University email address. The raw data may be viewed by my faculty thesis advisor and committee members. I will keep the data for 10 years and then will delete them from my password protected computer and accounts.

#### **Risks or Discomforts**

There are no perceived risks for participating in this study.

#### **Benefits**

There are no perceived benefits for participating in this study.

#### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw your permission at any time for any reason without penalty or prejudice. Please feel free to ask me or my faculty supervisor any questions before consenting to take this survey and at any time during the study.

#### **IRB Contact Information**

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Office of Research Integrity, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, [phone number] or [email address].

#### **Researcher Contact Information**

##### **Principle Investigator**

Will Chesher, Graduate MA Student  
English-Rhetoric and Composition  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
[Phone number]  
[Email address]

##### **Faculty Supervisor**

Dr. Jackie Grutsch McKinney  
English Department

Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
[Phone number]  
[Email address]

---

Q1 To the best of my knowledge, I fit the inclusion criteria for participating in this study.

- ☐ I consent to participate in this study and wish to continue to the survey (1)
- ☐ I do not consent to participate and do not wish to continue to the survey (2)

*Skip To: End of Survey If To the best of my knowledge, I fit the inclusion criteria for participating in this study. = I do not consent to participate and do not wish to continue to the survey*

End of Block: Consent Form

---

Start of Block: Program Demographics

Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition MA Program Demographics

This section includes questions about your institution type, your current role, faculty and student numbers, and program goals for your MA program in Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition.

---

Q2 Which of the following Carnegie Classifications best represents your current institution:

- ☐ R1: Doctoral Universities--Very high research (1)
- ☐ R2: Doctoral Universities--High research (2)
- ☐ R3 or D/PU: Doctoral/Professional University (3)
- ☐ M1: Master's Colleges and Universities--Large Size (4)
- ☐ M2: Master's Colleges and Universities--Medium Size (5)
- ☐ M3: Master's Colleges and Universities--Small Size (6)
- ☐ I don't know (7)
-

Q3 Which of the following best fits your current role:

- ☐ Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Graduate Program Director (1)
- ☐ Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Research Methods Professor or Instructor (2)
- ☐ Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Faculty (3)
- ☐ General English Graduate Program Director (4)
- ☐ Other (5) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q3 On average, how many MA students do you have enrolled in your Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition Program per year?

- ☐ 0 (1)
- ☐ 1-4 (2)
- ☐ 5-7 (3)
- ☐ 8-10 (4)
- ☐ 11-15 (5)
- ☐ 15-19 (6)
- ☐ 20+ (7)
-

Q4 On average, how many faculty do you have teaching graduate courses in your Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition MA program per year?

- ☐ 0 (1)
- ☐ 1-2 (2)
- ☐ 3-4 (3)
- ☐ 5-7 (4)
- ☐ 8-10 (5)
- ☐ 11-14 (6)
- ☐ 15+ (7)
- 

Q5 Do your MA program goals include research skills or experience(s) for MA students?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ No (2)
- ☐ I don't know (3)
- 

Q6 If you selected "Yes" in the previous question, please include the program goal(s) here:

---

End of Block: Program Demographics

---

Start of Block: Research Methods Course

Q7 These questions are specifically related to graduate research methods courses offered to Writing Studies/Rhetoric and Composition MA students. Questions in this section will be related to primary research methods.

Primary research is defined here as empirical research methodologies or methods where a researcher collects specific data or information for the purpose of a research inquiry.

---

Q8 Does your MA program offer a research methods course?

- ☐ Yes, the course is required (1)
- ☐ Yes, but the course is not required (2)
- ☐ No (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If Does your MA program offer a research methods course? = No*

---

Q9 When do MA students usually take the research methods course?

- ☐ Year 1 (1)
- ☐ Year 2 (2)
- ☐ Year 3 (3)
- ☐ Course is offered every other year, so students take it at different points in the program (4)
- ☐ Course is offered inconsistently, so students may not take it (5)
- ☐ Other (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q10 Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Qualitative Research (1)
- ☐ Quantitative Research (2)
- ☐ Mixed Methods Research (3)
- ☐ Bibliographic/Library Research (5)
- ☐ Other: (4) \_\_\_\_\_
-



*Display This Question:*

*If Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course?... = Qualitative Research*

Q11 What kinds of qualitative research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Qualitative Research (General) (1)
- ☐ Narrative Research Methods (2)
- ☐ Case-Study Research Methods (3)
- ☐ Phenomenological Research Methods (4)
- ☐ Grounded Theory Research Methods (5)
- ☐ Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser) (6)
- ☐ Straussian Grounded Theory (7)
- ☐ Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz) (8)
- ☐ Ethnography Research Methods (9)
- ☐ Autoethnography Research Methods (10)
- ☐ Institutional Ethnography Research Methods (11)
- ☐ Socio-Material Ethnography Methods (12)
- ☐ Rhetorical Analysis (13)
- ☐ Content Analysis (14)
- ☐ Discourse Analysis (15)
- ☐ Textual Analysis (16)

- ☐ Genre Analysis (17)
- ☐ Observation (18)
- ☐ Archival Research (physical) (19)
- ☐ Archival Research (digital) (20)
- ☐ RAD Research (Replicable, Aggregated, Design-Driven) (21)
- ☐ Action Research (22)
- ☐ Teacher Research (23)
- ☐ Self-Study Research (24)
- ☐ I do not know (25)
- ☐ Other: (26) \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course?... = Quantitative Research*

Q12 What kinds of quantitative research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

☐

Quantitative Research (General) (1)

☐

Quantitative Survey Design (2)

☐

Linguistic Analysis Methods (3)

☐

Corpus Analysis Methods (4)

☐

Experimental Design (Positivist Design) (5)

☐

I do not know (6)

☐

Other: (7) \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course?... = Mixed Methods Research*

Q13 What kinds of mixed-methods research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

☐

Mixed-Methods Research (General) (1)

☐

Convergent Mixed Methods Design (2)

☐

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (3)

☐

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (4)

☐

Mixed Methods Experimental (or Intervention) Design (5)

☐

Mixed Methods Case Study Design (6)

☐

Mixed Methods Participatory-Social Justice Design (7)

☐

I do not know (8)

☐

Other (9) \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course?... = Bibliographic/Library Research*

Q14 What kinds of bibliographic/library research methods and skills are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

☐

Library Research (physical) (1)

☐

Library Research (digital) (12)

☐

Database Research (physical) (4)

☐

Database Research (digital) (13)

☐

Annotated Bibliography (2)

☐

Literature Review (5)

☐

Synthesis (7)

☐

Theory Building (8)

☐

I do not know (9)

☐

Other (11) \_\_\_\_\_

-----

Q15 Which of the following are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

☐

Coding (General) (1)

☐

Open Coding (2)

☐

Values Coding (3)

☐

Holistic Coding (4)

☐

Grounded Theory Coding (open, axial, and selective) (5)

☐

Research Journals or Researcher Memos (6)

☐

Field Notes (7)

☐

Survey Design (8)

☐

Sampling (General) (9)

☐

Random Sampling (10)

☐

Stratified Sampling (11)

☐

Cluster Sampling (12)

☐

Interviewing (General) (13)

☐

Interviewing: One on one (14)

☐

Interviewing: Focus Group (15)

☐

Observation (General) (16)

- ☐ Observation (Class or Session) (17)
- ☐ Observation (Public Setting) (18)
- ☐ Archival Research (print) (19)
- ☐ Archival Research (digital) (20)
- ☐ Text Analysis (21)
- ☐ Conversation Analysis (22)
- ☐ Linguistic Analysis (23)
- ☐ Corpus Analysis (24)
- ☐ Genre Analysis (25)
- ☐ Triangulation (26)
- ☐ Member Checking (27)
- ☐ Reliability (28)
- ☐ Validity (29)
- ☐ Limitations to Research (30)
- ☐ I do not know (31)
- ☐ Other: (32) \_\_\_\_\_



## Start of Block: Secondary Research

This section includes questions about students conducting secondary research methods. These questions refer to a student's time in your program, **not only the research methods course**.

Secondary research is defined here as research methodologies or methods where the data being used comes from other scholars works or theories (this can also be referred to as theoretical research and some argue this is also called bibliographic/library research; see Byard's *Bibliographic Research in Composition Studies*, 2009).

---

Q16 Are students required to conduct secondary research as a part of the MA program?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ Maybe, it is not required but it is recommended (2)
- ☐ No (3)
- ☐ I do not know (4)
- 

Q17 Are students explicitly taught how to conduct secondary research in the MA program?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ Only if individual instructors teach this (2)
- ☐ No (3)
- ☐ I do not know (4)
- 

*Display This Question:*

*If Are students required to conduct secondary research as a part of the MA program? = Yes*

*Or Are students required to conduct secondary research as a part of the MA program? = Maybe, it is not required but it is recommended*

Q18 Which of the following types of secondary research are students expected to conduct as a part of their MA program? (Select all that apply)

☐

Annotated Bibliography (1)

☐

Literature Review (2)

☐

Seminar Paper (3)

☐

Book Reviews (4)

☐

I do not know (7)

☐

Other: (8) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Secondary Research

---

Start of Block: Primary Research

This section includes questions about MA students and primary research.

Primary research is defined here as empirical research methodologies or methods where a researcher collects specific data or information for the purpose of a research inquiry.

-----

Q19

Are students required to conduct primary research as a part of the MA program?

☐

Yes (1)

☐

Maybe, it is not required but it is recommended (2)

☐

No (3)

☐

I do not know (4)

-----

Q20 Are students explicitly taught how to conduct primary research as a part of the MA program (not including a research methods course)?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ Maybe (2)
- ☐ Only if individual instructors choose to teach this (3)
- ☐ No (4)
- ☐ I do not know (5)
- ☐ Other: (6) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Primary Research

---

Start of Block: Mentoring

Q21 This section includes questions about MA students gaining research experience(s) through mentorships or Research Assistant (RA) positions.

-----

Q22 Are MA students given the opportunity to serve as a Research Assistant (RA) for faculty projects?

- ☐ Yes, it is required (1)
- ☐ Yes, but it is not required (2)
- ☐ No, only PhD students can be RAs (3)
- ☐ No, our program does not offer this opportunity (4)
- ☐ Other: (5) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q23 To your knowledge, are MA students involved in the following as a RA (Select all that apply):

☐

Research Study Design (1)

☐

Research Methodology Design (2)

☐

Research Methods Design (3)

☐

Data Collection (4)

☐

Data Analysis (5)

☐

Writing a Report (6)

☐

Disseminating Study Findings (7)

☐

Publishing (8)

☐

Other: (9) \_\_\_\_\_

-----

Q24 What other opportunities exist for MA students in your programs to learn about research besides being a Research Assistant or taking a research methods course?

\_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: Mentoring

---

Start of Block: MA Student Research

This section includes questions about culminating projects for MA students in your program.

-----

Q25 Are MA students required to complete a culminating project of original research for your MA program?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ Maybe (2)
- ☐ No (3)

*Skip To: End of Block If Are MA students required to complete a culminating project of original research for your MA progr... = No*

---

*Display This Question:*

*If Are MA students required to complete a culminating project of original research for your MA progr... = Yes*

*Or Are MA students required to complete a culminating project of original research for your MA progr... = Maybe*

Q26 What types of culminating projects can MA students complete? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Masters Thesis (75-100 pages) (1)
- ☐ Masters Project (30-50 pages) (2)
- ☐ Research Prospectus (7)
- ☐ Creative Project (3)
- ☐ Collection of Scholarly Articles (4)
- ☐ Test (modeled off comprehensive exams) (5)
- ☐ Other: (6) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

*Display This Question:*

*If What types of culminating projects can MA students complete? (Select all that apply) != Test (modeled off comprehensive exams)*

Q27 To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research theses, projects, or prospectus have students completed at your institution? (Select all that apply.)

☐

Qualitative Research (1)

☐

Quantitative Research (2)

☐

Mixed Methods Research (3)

☐

Bibliographic/Library Research (6)

☐

I do not know (5)

☐

Other: (4) \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Qualitative Research*

Q28 What kinds of qualitative research projects have MA students completed for their culminating project? (Select all that apply)

☐

Narrative Research (1)

☐

Case-Study Research (2)

☐

Phenomenological Research (3)

☐

Grounded Theory Research (4)

☐

Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser) (5)

☐

Straussian Grounded Theory (6)

☐

Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz) (7)

☐

Ethnography Research (8)

☐

Autoethnography Research (9)

☐

Institutional Ethnography Research (10)

☐

Socio-Material Ethnography (11)

☐

Rhetorical Analysis (12)

☐

Content Analysis (13)

☐

Discourse Analysis (14)

☐

Textual Analysis (15)

☐

Genre Analysis (16)

- ☐ Archival Research (physical) (17)
- ☐ Archival Research (digital) (18)
- ☐ RAD Research (Replicable, Aggregated, Design-Driven) (19)
- ☐ Action Research (20)
- ☐ Teacher Research (21)
- ☐ Self-Study Research (22)
- ☐ I do not know (23)
- ☐ Other: (24) \_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Qualitative Research*

Q29 In your experience, what type of qualitative research is most commonly conducted for a culminating MA research project?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Quantitative Research*



Q30 What kinds of quantitative research projects have MA students completed for their culminating project? (Select all that apply)

☐

Quantitative Survey Design (1)

☐

Linguistic Analysis Methods (2)

☐

Corpus Analysis Methods (3)

☐

Experimental Design (Positivist Design) (4)

☐

I do not know (5)

☐

Other: (6) \_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Quantitative Research*

Q31 In your experience, what type of quantitative research is most commonly conducted for a culminating MA research project?

\_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Mixed Methods Research*

Q32 What kinds of mixed methods research projects have MA students completed for their culminating project? (Select all that apply)

☐

Convergent Mixed Methods Design (1)

☐

Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (2)

☐

Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design (3)

☐

Mixed Methods Experimental (or Intervention) Design (4)

☐

Mixed Methods Case Study Design (5)

☐

Mixed Methods Participatory-Social Justice Design (6)

☐

I do not know (7)

☐

Other (8) \_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Mixed Methods Research*

Q33 In your experience, what type of mixed-methods research is most commonly conducted for a culminating MA research project?

\_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Bibliographic/Library Research*

Q34 What kinds of bibliographic/library research projects have MA students completed for their culminating projects?

☐

Annotated Bibliography (1)

☐

Literature Review (4)

☐

Seminar Paper (5)

☐

Book Review (2)

☐

I do not know (6)

☐

Other (7) \_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Bibliographic/Library Research*

Q35 In your experience, what type of "Bibliographic/Library" research projects are most commonly conducted for a culminating MA research project?

\_\_\_\_\_

*Display This Question:*

*If To your knowledge, in the past five (5) academic years, what kinds of MA culminating research the... = Other:*

Q36 In your experience, what type of "Other" projects are most commonly conducted for a culminating MA research project?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q37 Are thesis/project directors or committee members for the culminating project expected to teach students how to complete their project?

- ☐ Yes (1)
- ☐ Maybe, this is up to the professor (2)
- ☐ No (3)
- ☐ Other: (4) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q38 On average, how long does your program provide an MA student to complete their culminating project?

- ☐ One (1) academic term (quarter) (1)
- ☐ Two (2) academic terms (quarters) (2)
- ☐ Three (3) academic terms (quarters) (3)
- ☐ More than three (3) academic terms (quarters) (4)
- ☐ One (1) academic term (semester) (5)
- ☐ Two (2) academic terms (semesters) (6)
- ☐ Three (3) academic terms (semesters) (7)
- ☐ More than three (3) academic terms (semesters) (8)
- ☐ Other: (9) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q39 On average, how long does it actually take an MA student to complete their culminating project?

- ☐ One (1) academic term (quarter) (1)
- ☐ Two (2) academic terms (quarters) (2)
- ☐ Three (3) academic terms (quarters) (3)
- ☐ More than three (3) academic terms (quarters) (4)
- ☐ One (1) academic term (semester) (5)
- ☐ Two (2) academic terms (semesters) (6)
- ☐ Three (3) academic terms (semesters) (7)
- ☐ More than three (3) academic terms (semesters) (8)
- ☐ Other: (9) \_\_\_\_\_

End of Block: MA Student Research

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## Appendix E: Methodologies and Methods Results Tables

Q10 - Which of the following types of research methodologies are taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply)

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Qualitative Research	30.30% 30
2	Quantitative Research	17.17% 17
3	Mixed Methods Research	28.28% 28
4	Bibliographic/Library Research	19.19% 19
5	Other:	5.05% 5
		99

Q10\_TEXT - Other:

Other:

some Analytics

A separate course addresses bibliographic methods

Corpus linguistics

What does bibliographic include? Finding/using secondary research? Work in archives/special collections? (we do an archival research unit)

Rhetoric

Q11 - What kinds of qualitative research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply)

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Qualitative Research (General)	9.36%
2	Narrative Research Methods	4.68%
3	Case-Study Research Methods	8.03%
4	Phenomenological Research Methods	2.01%
5	Grounded Theory Research Methods	4.35%
6	Classic Grounded Theory (Glaser)	1.34%
7	Straussian Grounded Theory	0.00%
8	Constructivist Grounded Theory (Charmaz)	1.00%
9	Ethnography Research Methods	9.03%
10	Autoethnography Research Methods	4.01%
11	Institutional Ethnography Research Methods	1.67%
12	Socio-Material Ethnography Methods	0.67%
13	Rhetorical Analysis	6.69%
14	Content Analysis	4.01%
15	Discourse Analysis	7.02%
16	Textual Analysis	6.35%
17	Genre Analysis	4.01%
18	Observation	4.35%
19	Archival Research (physical)	5.69%
20	Archival Research (digital)	5.02%
21	RAD Research (Replicable, Aggregated, Design-Driven)	2.68%
22	Action Research	2.68%
23	Teacher Research	3.68%

24	Self-Study Research	0.67%
25	I do not know	0.00%
26	Other:	1.00%

Q11\_TEXT - Other:

Other:

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a separate course focuses on rhetorical analysis

depends on the instructor and student interest

I'm answering based on how I taught the course. Not sure how others might teach it, plus it hasn't been taught in some time (mine was a special topics)



Q12 - What kinds of quantitative research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

#		
1	Quantitative Research (General)	32.61% 15
2	Quantitative Survey Design	23.91% 11
3	Linguistic Analysis Methods	8.70% 4
4	Corpus Analysis Methods	19.57% 9
5	Experimental Design (Positivist Design)	13.04% 6
6	I do not know	0.00% 0
7	Other:	2.17% 1
		46

Q12\_TEXT - Other:

Other:

correlational methods

Q13 - What kinds of mixed-methods research methods are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Mixed-Methods Research (General)	46.94% 23
2	Convergent Mixed Methods Design	8.16% 4
3	Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design	4.08% 2
4	Exploratory Sequential Mixed Methods Design	8.16% 4
5	Mixed Methods Experimental (or Intervention) Design	6.12% 3
6	Mixed Methods Case Study Design	14.29% 7
7	Mixed Methods Participatory-Social Justice Design	12.24% 6
8	I do not know	0.00% 0
9	Other	0.00% 0

Q14 - What kinds of bibliographic/library research methods and skills are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Library Research (physical)	14.14% 14
2	Library Research (digital)	15.15% 15
3	Database Research (physical)	8.08% 8
4	Database Research (digital)	15.15% 15
5	Annotated Bibliography	14.14% 14
6	Literature Review	16.16% 16
7	Synthesis	11.11% 11
8	Theory Building	5.05% 5
9	I do not know	0.00% 0
10	Other	1.01% 1

Q14\_TEXT - Other

Other

Depends on what's meant by explicit

Q15 - Which of the following are explicitly taught in the research methods course? (Select all that apply.)

#	Field	Choice Count
1	Coding (General)	5.88% 22
2	Open Coding	1.60% 6
3	Values Coding	0.53% 2
4	Holistic Coding	2.14% 8
5	Grounded Theory Coding (open, axial, and selective)	2.14% 8
6	Research Journals or Researcher Memos	4.28% 16
7	Field Notes	4.01% 15
8	Survey Design	4.28% 16
9	Sampling (General)	3.74% 14
10	Random Sampling	1.87% 7
11	Stratified Sampling	1.34% 5
12	Cluster Sampling	1.60% 6
13	Interviewing (General)	7.49% 28
14	Interviewing: One on one	3.74% 14
15	Interviewing: Focus Group	1.87% 7
16	Observation (General)	5.61% 21
17	Observation (Class or Session)	2.14% 8
18	Observation (Public Setting)	2.67% 10
19	Archival Research (print)	4.28% 16
20	Archival Research (digital)	3.48% 13
21	Text Analysis	5.88% 22
22	Conversation Analysis	1.87% 7
23	Linguistic Analysis	3.21% 12
24	Corpus Analysis	2.67% 10
25	Genre Analysis	2.41% 9

26	Triangulation	4.55%	17
27	Member Checking	1.87%	7
28	Reliability	4.01%	15
29	Validity	4.01%	15
30	Limitations to Research	3.74%	14
31	I do not know	0.00%	0
32	Other:	1.07%	4

374

Showing rows 1 - 33 of 33

Q15\_TEXT -\\

Other: Other:

Systematicity

Depends on what's meant by explicit

Research Ethics

We have a separate course that teaches the research methods of scholarly editing, but it's not been offered in several years due to low demand